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LONGMANS' HISTORY OF INDIA

(FROM THE BEGINNING TO A.D. 1526)

SHABIR AHMED

Bsc. LLB.

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marked as a Hindu religious man.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This text-book has been prepared to meet the requirements of students reading for the Intermediate Examination of the Punjab University. An endeavour has been made to cover, in a small compass, the entire range of the syllabus prescribed for the Indian History paper.

In regard to the treatment, of the subject as a whole and of certain topics in particular, special pains have been taken to make these intelligible to the students of the Intermediate standard. For instance, the cultural aspects of the Vedic, the Epic and the Buddhist periods, of which an average student has little or no clear conception, have been explained. In like manner, the tangled tale of the invasions by the Bactrian Greeks, the Sakas, the Parthians and the Scythians, in which a student usually finds himself lost, has been told in a connected, though brief, outline. It is only the bearing of those invasions on the cultural history of the country that has been emphasized—the details of names of men and places as well as other unimportant incidents having been excised from the narrative. The Gupta period has been treated with a view to concentrating attention on the dominant movements of the fourth century A.D., viz. the decline of Buddhism, the revival of Hinduism and the Cultural Renaissance. These movements have been described rather more fully than is usual in a text-book of this size. The period of five centuries following the death of Harsha is so full of confusing detail that it is not possible to string all facts on a single thread in the narrative of political history of the country. An attempt has, accordingly, been made to include in the text only those events which lead up to the main theme in the period following, and those of the latter part are treated as naturally following from it. The part relating to the Muhammadan period has been almost wholly incorporated from Messrs. Garrett and Kohli's book, after having been amplified and revised in the light of later researches.

The Publishers' thanks are due to Messrs. H. L. O. Garrett and Sita Ram Kohli for the use of material from their book, *History of India, Part 2: The Muhammadan Period*, and to Mr. Sita Ram Kohli for going through the manuscript of the Hindu period and giving valuable help and suggestions in the preparation of this book.

SECOND EDITION

The edition of the book which is now offered has been revised and enlarged, partly in response to suggestions from teachers

and partly to meet a few special requirements of University students. Such topics as a student is expected to prepare for his examination have received special attention in the revision.

The most distinctive feature of the present edition is the Notes which have been appended to each chapter. These Notes are not for the most part mere summaries of the narrative given in the chapter, but are complementary to it.

A selection of Examination questions have been added to each chapter as to enable the student to gather an idea of the standard of efficiency that is required at the University Examination.

THIRD EDITION

The present edition of the book has been again revised. A few errors of dates and of transliteration which had crept into the book have now been removed.

CHAPTER I.

The Land and the People

SECTION I. THE GEOGRAPHICAL FACTOR IN INDIAN HISTORY

The physical features of a country have always influenced the course of its political, social and economic history; and a study of the history of India clearly brings out the truth of this statement.

*Physical
features
of India:
'Splendid
isolation'*

India is surrounded on all sides by high mountains and seas. This fact more than anything else, perhaps, accounts for its 'splendid isolation,' as also for the development of a civilization which is distinct in important respects from the civilization of the rest of the world. To a very large extent the habits, the dress, the religion, the laws and the learning of the Indians have been what they have themselves evolved and found to be suitable for themselves. A few traces of foreign influence on Indian learning and art, of the Greeks and the Arabs in ancient and mediaeval times and of the Europeans in more modern times, can be perceived, but they are, without doubt, comparatively small when considered along with the vast panorama of historical development.

But, in spite of its natural defences, India was never immune from external attack; and the invaders did find a passage through the passes where the high mountain walls are pierced by rivers and valleys. The greatest and the highest mountains known as the Himalayas form a sort of wall some 1,500 miles in length in the north of the country, and its western and eastern offshoots form the two side walls of the vast plains in Northern Hindustan. The Northern wall though pierced by many openings has not been used by immigrants or invaders owing to the high elevation of the Himalayan range.¹ Similarly, the north-eastern ranges which comprise the Patankai and the Naga hills and run down to the Bay of Bengal have offered tremendous difficulties to invaders. Their dense trackless forests have made access to India through them almost impossible even though these forests have, for ages, served as the home of savage and warlike tribes. It is the openings in the north-western wall of India, how-

The gateways

¹ In historical times, the high passes in the Himalayan range have been used only twice for transporting large armies viz. by the Kushan emperor Kanishka and in more recent times by Lord Curzon during the invasion of the Lama's territory.

ever, which, owing to their low elevation and the absence of forests, have offered an easy access to the invaders of the country from times immemorial. The Aryans, Persians, Greeks, Scythians, Turks, Tartars, Mughals and Durranis all came this way.¹ These openings or passes which form regular gateways to India (from south to north) are :

(i) The Mekran route: In and before the Middle ages this route appears to have been most frequented. When Alexander left India one of the divisions of the Greek army marched through the Mekran country and in later times the Arab traders with Sind and the Arab conquerors of Sind came by this route.

(ii) The Mulla Pass: This was also a very old route for traders and it was by this route that Alexander himself with the major portion of his army had marched back from India.

(iii) The Bolan Pass: The Bolan valley lies between the Kirthar and the Suleman ranges, and the route along the Bolan river leads to the northern parts of Sind.

(iv) The Sakhi Sarwar Pass in the Suleman range commands the old trade route leading from Southern Afghanistan and converges on to Multan in the Panjab. On its western side, this route is connected with Kandahar and thence on to Persia. It was by this route that Nadir Shah led back his army to Persia after his loot of Delhi.

(v) The Gomal Pass: This is, perhaps, the oldest and the most frequented of all the trade routes from Afghanistan into India. It passes through the valley of the Gomal river which divides Baluchistan from Afghanistan. This route emerges all along the Derajat country and like the Sakhi Sarwar route converges for the most part on Multan, which from the earliest times has been the main strategic point of the lower Indus valley.

(vi) The Kuram and the Tochi passes form the middle routes leading from Kabul and Ghazni into the Panjab. South of the Sufed Koh, the Kuram valley contains the site of many an ancient town. The Kuram route leads to the upper Derajat and the Tochi route to Bannu. The latter is the shortest route from Ghazni into the Panjab and it was through the Tochi Pass that Mahmud led his expeditions into Sind and Multan.

(vii) The Khyber Pass in the north which commands the direct route from Kabul to Peshawar and on to the Panjab and the Gangetic plains forms, perhaps, the chief gateway from Afghanistan into India. It is through this gateway that countless invaders and immigrants have passed into India since the dawn of history.

(viii) The Swat and the Chitral Passes are the openings in the offshoots of the Hindu Kush range, forming the routes from Turkistan into the valleys of Swat, Bajaur, and Chitral. Alexander himself led a division

¹ The countries that lie beyond the passes are equally rugged and rocky and being hemmed in by mountains receive very little or no rainfall. Hence the inhabitants of these regions are poor and needy, and their poverty has compelled them to invade the rich lands of India. They are strong in body and capable of enduring much hardship. On the contrary, the lands that lie beyond the northeastern ranges are as productive and rich as those of India and the people living therein are as little enterprising as the Indians. Hence few or no invasions have taken place from the eastern side.

of his Greek army through these passes into the Panjab and joined his main force at Ohind.

(ix) The Gilgit Pass is the most northerly point in the western offshoots of the Himalayan range. Situated in the Hindukush it commands the route from Turkistan into the valley of Kashmir.

These are the gateways through which bands of traders and hosts of invaders have entered and left India in historic and pre-historic times. For the security of the country, it becomes imperative that these gateways must always be kept well-guarded. Instances are not wanting to show that whenever the Government of India neglected the defence on this side, it invariably came to grief.) The invasions of the Greeks in the Post-Asokan Period, of the Huns in the Gupta Age, of the Mongols in the times of the Sultans of Delhi, and of the Durrani in the times of the later Mughals, may be quoted as some of the instances bearing on the point. }

(The Arabian Sea on the west and the Bay of Bengal on the east, which meet at Cape Comorin, the southernmost point of the country, afford another natural frontier to India. But this ocean barrier too, like the mountain barriers in the north, has given the country and its people security but no immunity from external invasions. In ancient times, since the navy was not so developed that it could be used as an instrument of aggressive warfare, the seas around India continued to serve her as effective frontiers from external attack; but from the beginning of the sixteenth century A.D. when the European naval powers had discovered the sea route to India the ocean no longer served as a barrier. The Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the English approached the shores of India through the gateways of the seas. In earlier times, even the Indians themselves used the sea as a high water-way for the purposes of trade, commerce and colonization.) The Indian merchant boats plied the ocean as far as the Malayan group of islands in the east and the Persian Gulf and coasts of Africa in the west.

(But the maritime activities and the commerce of the ancient Indians were confined to a limited and restricted area. The country, throughout its long history, has not given birth to any maritime power of consequence and the reason is not far to seek. The Indian coastal lines, both on the east and on the west, are practically straight and unbroken. No bay or gulf brings the water of the sea into the interior of the country. There is not a single good harbour along the whole length of the east coast and scarcely any on the west coast below Bombay. Even the estuaries of the great rivers are covered with silt so that only small boats can, as a rule, sail up them.)

*The gateways
of the seas*

*Unbroken
coast lines—
their influence
on the course
of history*

Between the Himalayan system of mountains and the ranges

known as the Vindhya-chal and the Satpura, there extend wide alluvial plains about 1,700 miles in length from the Arabian Sea on the west to the Bay of Bengal on the east. Altogether these plains cover an area of a little over 500,000 square miles and are inhabited by over 165 millions of people. These plains were formed by the deposit of rich soil washed down during countless centuries from the vast Himalayan ranges on the north, and from the hills and uplands of the Deccan on the south. Again, the river systems of Northern India, namely the Indus and its tributaries, the Ganges and its affluents and the Brahmaputra and its feeders irrigate these wide plains. These facts explain the fertility and the density of population in this region; and the richness and fertility of land in their turn account for the multiplicity of big towns, centres of trade and the capitals of ancient and modern empires in one or another part of these plains.¹ It is to these rivers, in fact, that Northern India owes everything.² The climatic conditions of this region had an adverse effect upon the fortunes of the people living therein. While the abundance of leisure and the absence of a keen struggle for existence made it possible for the intellectual classes to devote themselves to the development of thought and culture,³ a luxurious and easy life, on the other hand, enervated the masses and their wealth and riches tempted numerous invaders.)

This wide northern plain is broken into three divisions by wedges projecting northward from the rugged central region, namely Rajputana towards the west and the Santhal Parganas farther east. The basin from the Gangetic plain, and the Santhal Parganas divides the region of Bengal from the main Gangetic plain. South of Delhi lies the waterless tract of the Himalayan system. Both of these offered a serious obstacle to the march of the armies. The invaders from Central Asia passing through the Panjab to the Gangetic valley had, therefore, no alternative but to go through a narrow bottlenecked plain of less than 200 miles in width. This fact explains why all the decisive battles for the defence of the kingdoms situated in the Gangetic plain have been fought at one or another place in this narrow plain. The battle fields of Kurukshetra, Tarain, Karnal and Panipat are all within this gap.

Importance of the plain of Panipat

1 Bengal, Bihar, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Delhi and the Panjab are all situated in these wide plains. All big kingdoms in ancient, mediaeval, and modern times were also established in these plains.

2 Popular Hindu reverence for the Ganges is, very probably, due to a feeling of gratitude for the manifold benefits which this river system has bestowed on the country since the dawn of history.

3 It was in these regions that the Vedic civilization had its birth, and Buddhism and Jainism, too, had their beginnings.

The Deccan is a triangular table-land rising abruptly in the west and sloping away towards the east. All its important rivers with the exception of the Narbada and the Tapti which flow westwards and fall into the Arabian Sea, all others flow eastwards into the Bay of Bengal. In the wet season these rivers are often in flood and are not of much service as a means of communication. On the other hand, the rivers of the North, viz., the Indus and the Ganges, and their main tributaries derive from the Himalayan snow-fields, and, with a more regular flow of water, are navigable from the Bay of Bengal to Agra, and from the Arabian Sea to Lahore. In fact, before the introduction of railways, both these river systems used to carry a large volume of trade and traffic.

*The Deccan—
its special
features*

The Deccan table-land is separated from Hindustan proper by a number of natural barriers. The Vindhya and the Satpuras with their outlying ranges form one important barrier towards the north. The valleys of the Narbada and the Tapti rivers as well as the dense jungle lying south of the Chota Nagpur region constitute other barriers which are difficult to cross. This cleavage has resulted in a tendency to keep the history of Hindustan apart from that of the Deccan. (The two have only seldom been combined in one political and cultural bond.) Had these barriers been more effective even an occasional and temporary political union would not have come about. But to-day, since modern scientific inventions have been able to overcome these natural difficulties of communication, Northern and Southern India find themselves drawn more closely together.

The Deccan plateau is flanked on the west by a continuous high mountain wall (700 miles) called the Western Ghats and on the east by the low Eastern Ghats. The Western Ghats are steep and rise to a height of from 3,000 to 8,000 feet above sea level. They have very few and difficult passes. The narrow strip (in many places it is not more than 20 miles wide) of land which lies between the coast and the foot of the Ghats has a rich soil and is always green with rice and coconut trees. Before the introduction of modern means of communications and improved system of roads it was hard and in many places impossible to climb or cross the Western Ghats. The tribes which lived in this coastal land particularly in the Southern parts were, for ages, shut off from the rest of the Deccan. Some of these people even now follow customs found nowhere else in India. In the far north on the west coast, however,

*The Eastern
and the
Western
Ghats*

¹ To illustrate this point reference should be made to the attempts made by Asoka, Samudragupta, Ala-ud-din Khilji, and Muhammad Tughlak. Even the strongest of the Mughal monarchs namely Aurangzeb did not succeed in completely subduing the Deccan.

things are different. The two great rivers, the Narbada and the Tapti have broken through the western scarp and cut wide valleys across them which have formed easy paths upwards. It is in this region that great kingdoms and civilized people have lived from early ages. Again, the sea ports at the mouths of these two rivers (Surat, Broach, etc.) formed the main outlet of Indian commerce with the west.

The coastal land which lies below the Eastern Ghats is much broader; and the eastern scarp itself is of a low elevation and is broken, in many places, by the valleys of the Deccan rivers which flow from west to east. Thus the communication on the east coast with the uplands of the Deccan has always been easy and, as we shall find during the course of our narrative, there have been great kingdoms, famous cities and civilized nations in the whole of this region. Again, it was from the eastern sea ports that the people of Southern India maintained intercourse for a long period with Java and Sumatra, and with Burma, Siam and Indo-China.

The Mysore region forms the southernmost part of the Deccan plateau and below it to the east and west lies open country stretching to the sea. The descent from the high lands of Mysore to these plains below has been a determining factor in the making of their history. On the west, the descent being more abrupt, is attended with insurmountable difficulties, hence the regions of Cochin and Travancore have not been much influenced by the political and military ambitions of the rulers of Mysore. On the other hand, the approach to the eastern and southern plains being gradual and easy from its uplands, Mysore has dominated the history of the Carnatic region.

We do not know when, or from what sources India was first populated. Geologists tell us that it must be thousands and thousands of years before our time that man first appeared in India. They further tell us that at that time the Deccan was linked by a stretch of land with South Africa on one side and perhaps also with Australia on the other.¹

Whether these men came from Australia or from Africa or lived in India is equally uncertain. One thing, however, is certain and that is that the first traces of man in India are found in the Deccan. The rude flint weapons which belong to the men of the Stone Age are met with in Southern India either in the

¹ This land connection lasted for thousands of years but was afterwards broken, the intervening lands having subsided beneath the ocean. Even now bones of animals and remains of plants of the same kinds are found both on the uplands of the Deccan and in the South-east of Africa, and below the surface of the sea there is a ridge connecting India with Africa.

caves and rude rock-shelters of the Vindhyan and Nilgiri hills or buried deep in the ground, far below the sites of the most ancient towns. But this is not of very great importance to us to-day. The important fact for us to know is that India to-day is inhabited by 389 millions of people¹ who belong to more than 40 distinct races or nationalities and speak about 150 different languages and use as many as 30 different scripts. In this vast medley of population three racial elements, however, can be distinguished with confidence, which are described in popular language as the Jungle tribes, the Dravidians, and the Aryans.

Of these, the Kols, the Bhils and the Santhals, or the so-called Jungle tribes, appear to be the oldest inhabitants of India. They live in the Rajmahal hills in Western Bengal, the uplands of Chota Nagpur and Orissa and the hills *The Kols* in the Central Provinces, and still speak distinctive languages known as the Munda or the Kolarian group of languages. It is surmised that at one time they occupied a much wider area, and that they were gradually pressed back into the comparatively safer retreats of valleys and forests by stronger and more powerful immigrants who eventually spread over almost the whole country. These were the Dravidians.

We know as little about the forefathers of the Dravids as we do about those of the Kols. They may, like them, have descended directly from the men of the Stone and the Metal Ages or as some antiquarians suggest they may have come from outside and entered *The Dravidians* India by way of the Mekran coast. There is, no doubt, some resemblance between the Dravidian language and the language spoken by the Brahuīs who live in the Kirthar mountains of southern Baluchistan but the resemblance ends there. The Brahuīs have none of the race-marks of the Dravids nor any of their customs. Another group of scholars is of the opinion that the Dravidians came to India from the south through the submerged Indo-African tract. However, one point is clear about the Dravidians and that is that they once dominated the whole of India. Again, there is evidence to show that at least 5,000 years ago, they were a civilized people who had built great cities and kingdoms in India and carried on a large trade with Persia, Mesopotamia, and Asia Minor.

In after times, as the new immigrants came and settled in India, some from the north-west and others from the north-east, these civilized Dravidians first fought with them and then mixed with them, forming new races. Thus, in the course of time, the Dravidians were completely pushed out of the northern countries with the result that not a trace of Dravidian blood is now found

¹ Census figures, 1941.

in the Panjab, Kashmir, Rajputana and the North-west of India. The inhabitants of Bengal and those of the United Provinces still bear some traces of the Dravidian race-marks in their physical features. In the Deccan and in the far south, however, the civilized Dravidian nations have changed very little in appearance. They have also kept most of their own religion, their customs, and their languages like the Tamil, the Telugu and the Malayalam.

The third principal element in the population of India consists of the Aryans whose arrival in India may almost be described as
The Aryans a matter of history. It is discussed at some length in the next chapter.

Later additions to the populations of India include the Iranians, the Greeks, the Scythians and the Huns who came to our country as conquerors and some of whom finally
The Iranians,
Greeks,
Scythians
and Huns adopted India as their home. A fuller and more detailed account of their incursions will be given later in this book.

In more recent times, however, the Muslim conquerors and immigrants from Persia, Afghanistan, and beyond have been pouring into the north, and far into the centre and eastern part of the country. They have added a new racial element to the population of India, but we must remember in
The Muslims this case that the numbers of Muslims in the population of the country to-day do not furnish a clue to the race, for in the past few centuries conversions to Islam have occurred on a fairly large scale in some parts of Northern India.

Such are the main elements which have gone towards the making up of the Indian people of to-day, but besides these there are a few minor elements, too, which can be
The minor
elements easily discerned in the vast mass of the Indian population. These are the Armenians, Africans, Parsees, Portuguese and men from other European nations. Some of these have, indeed, preserved their individuality but others have intermingled with the inhabitants of the land and have produced distinct groups or classes of people.¹

Like the three main racial elements in the population of India, we can trace the influence of the three primary groups of languages on the 150 different languages which are spoken today in the various parts of this sub-continent. Of these, the Munda or the Kolarian group is one, although from the point of view of literature it is quite unimportant. The second

¹ The intermingling of the Arabs and the Indians on the west coast of India has produced a class of people known as Moplahs, and to the advent of Europeans must be attributed the mixed race called Eurasians or Anglo-Indians.

is the Dravidian group which is represented by Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kanarese, Tulu and Droan *The* languages. Most of the people of South *Languages* India speak one or another of these languages and some of them, indeed, have an extensive literature. This group of languages is entirely different from the Indo-Aryan languages, so much so that a Dravidian speaker will find it difficult to make himself understood when he travels in the north of India. The third, or the Indo-Aryan group, embraces all the principal vernaculars of Hindustan proper, namely Panjabi, Kashmiri, Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Sindi, Gujarati and Nepali. All these are descended from the early languages of India and simply "shade off into each other." The modern Urdu and the so-called Hindustani have resulted from the intercourse of Persian-speaking invaders and immigrants with the Hindi speaking people of the Gangetic valley.

In spite, however, of this diversity in the race, religion and language of the Indian peoples there is a fundamental unity which no historian can fail to recognise. By giving the Himalayas in the north, and the ocean *Fundamental Unity* on its remaining three sides, nature herself, it appears, intended to bestow a geographical unity on India. That this fact was fully realised by the early Aryan settlers of the country is beyond doubt. Their most sacred places of pilgrimage such as Badrinath, Dwarka, Rameshvaram and Jagannath practically include the whole country between them and a visit to these places is enjoined by his religion upon every pious Hindu. Again, the daily prayer of a Hindu includes the names of all the principal rivers of Northern and Southern India like the Indus (Sindhu), Ganges, Jumna, Godavari, Narbada and Kaveri which helps to remind him of the vastness of his country as also of the cultural unity of its people. This cultural unity and the homogeneity of the Hindus is also reflected in their social and religious rites and festivals which are the same in both the North and the South.

It is doubtful if the idea of political unity to the extent to which we have it to-day was ever attained in ancient or mediaeval India. Expressions like Chakravartin and the usages of the Ashvamedha Yajnas (horse sacrifices) in Sanskrit literature indicate, no doubt, the presence of the idea of universal sovereignty but how far or how often it was actually achieved we cannot say. In the recorded history of the country, we have a couple of instances in ancient times and several in mediaeval times when a Mauryan or a Gupta emperor or a Khilji sultan or a Mughal ruler attempted to establish his sway over Northern and Southern India. But this sway, as we know, was only short-lived in each case and had seldom taken deep root, except, perhaps, in the case of the Mughals who tried to impose a uni-

form system of administration upon all parts of the country.

SECTION II. SOURCES OF INDIAN HISTORY

One of the very serious difficulties which writers of ancient Indian History have always experienced is the lack of proper historical works, *i.e.*, the account of public events with the dates of their happening. Whether the ancient Indians, who have produced good books in almost all known branches of knowledge, deliberately neglected writing the history of their kings or whether the historical works did exist in the country at one time and subsequently perished as the result of an unfavourable climate and numerous political upheavals is difficult to say. But the available evidence seems to show that, the more learned and intellectual members of society never seriously applied themselves to this branch of literature, and that the task of recording and preserving the annals of great kings was entrusted to professional bards and chroniclers.¹ A few of these bardic records composed during the Mediaeval ages have, indeed, been preserved such as the Vanshavalis of the Orissa and Nepal rulers and the Prithviraj Raso of Chand Bardai, a number of which have been embodied by Colonel Tod in his Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan. But the more ancient ones have been lost or have perished with the bardic families during the dynastic revolutions and civil wars.

The vast mass of ancient Sanskrit literature like the Vedas, the Upanishadas, the Epics and the Sutras is not, therefore, very helpful in this direction. Their chief value lies in providing us with important material relating to the social and religious life of the people.

The lack of historical works does not imply an entire lack of historical material in the extensive literature of the country. Rudiments of history are, indeed, preserved in the Epics and the Puranas. These books contain a good deal of genealogical matter, although it is extremely difficult, in some cases, to arrange the given lists of kings in their chronological order without the help of other sources. There are also available, in Sanskrit literature, a few biographical or semi-historical works such as the Harsha-Charita of Banabhatta, the Vikramanka-devacharita of Bilhana and Bhojaprabandha of Ballala and the Prithviraj Raso of Chand Bardai, etc. Although these works are written in a highly eulogistic style and contain a good deal of what apparently reads like romance,

¹Albiruni, in his Tahkik-i-Hind, says: "The Hindus do not pay much attention to the historical order of things; they are very careless in relating the Chronological succession of things, and when they are pressed for information and are at a loss not knowing what to say, they invariably take to tale-telling."

yet, a great amount of historical data can be gathered from them. Again, the voluminous Buddhist and Jain traditional literature forms, if not an independent, yet an important corroborative source of early Indian history.¹ The only professedly historical work in Sanskrit literature is, however, the one known as the *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana. This belongs to the late twelfth century and contains useful information about the history of Kashmir from the seventh century A.D. onwards. Besides these regular sources, scattered references to some important historical events are also found in books which are not historical in character. For instance, two or three chance illustrations by Patanjali, the famous grammarian, of the use of the present and past imperfect tenses has a reference to the performance of the Ashvamedha sacrifice by Pushyamitra and to the invasion of India by the Bactrian Greeks. We have also certain Tamil poems of the first and second centuries A.D., which throw a sidelight on political events in the history of South India.

The numismatic and epigraphic records of ancient India are another valuable indigenous source of information. A very large number of inscriptions on rocks, stones and copper plates have been discovered and deciphered during the last century. Some of these were inscribed by the orders of kings, like the Edicts of Asoka or the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta; others are of a private nature recording gifts of land or cash by individuals for charitable or religious purposes. Their chief value, as historical documents, consists in the fact that they sometimes mention the name of the reigning king and are dated in the current eras. In fact, from the time of Asoka onwards, inscriptions are the most important and reliable source of historical studies.²

*Numismatic,
epigraphic,
and other
archaeological
sources*

¹ The Buddhist books are mostly in Pali and comprise the three famous Pitakas, the Jatakas, the Dipavamsha and the Mahavamsha. For the Pitakas see P. 63. The Jatakas are the birth stories of the Buddha in the former lives which he was supposed to have lived. They are arranged in 22 books and contain altogether 550 stories. Many of these stories centre round folklore, current tales, popular superstitions and popular customs and as such they give us a vivid picture of the social life of the times. Incidentally, the Jataka tales also throw light on the economic organization of society during the 6th century B.C. when the Buddha and Mahavira had both flourished. The Dipvamsa was written in the 5th century A.D. in the Pali language and primarily deals with the history of Ceylon. The Mahavamsa is also a Buddhist historical work concerning Ceylon and was composed in the 5th century A.D. But these books contain references to India of the Buddha's time.

² The inscriptions issued by kings or their governors, indeed, constitute records of exceptional interest and value, inasmuch as they supply details of the system of administration both urban and rural, and also of their activities in regard to works of public utility. Again, the history of the Gupta Kings is mainly based on the inscriptional finds, both public and private, of that age, otherwise the literature of the contemporary period records very little about these mighty monarchs.

Similarly, coins issued by kings and collected in very large numbers from various parts of India have yielded valuable information. It is with the help of these coins that long lists of kings and their dates have been compiled. They also furnish a clue to the locality over which these kings ruled. This is particularly true of the Indo-Bactrian and Indo-Parthian dynasties that ruled over various parts of north-western India.

Other branches of archæology have also contributed their share to the illumination of dark places in the history of India, and the work of the Archæological Survey carried out by experts in various parts of the country has yielded valuable data for the history of Indian culture. Sir John Marshall's excavations at Taxila, for instance, have resulted in the unearthing of valuable specimens of the Gandhara School of Art. Similarly, Dr. Spooner's work on the site of the Old Pataliputra has led to the solution of some important historical points concerning the Mauryan age. The ancient site of Sarnath near Benares, too, has supplied valuable historical material. The recent excavations at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro are, perhaps, the most important archæological discoveries made during the last thirty years. These have, at one stroke, pushed back the history of India by more than three thousand years.

The difficulty in reconstructing the story of India's past from material supplied by Indian literature and from the results of archæological discoveries is mainly chronological. *Chronological difficulties* No certain or definite dates can be assigned to some of the most important events in the history of the country, such as for instance, the coming of the Aryans, the composition of the Vedas, the war of the Mahabharata, etc. Similarly, in later or historical times, the fixing of dates is not an easy matter. The years mentioned in connection with the events both as recorded in epigraphic and in literary records often omit the names of the eras used therein. They simply mention the year 120 or so. Again, of the thirty different eras that are used in Indian annals it has not been possible to ascertain the starting date of the majority of them. Till the discovery of the Mandasor inscription, for instance, even the imperial Gupta era, was a great puzzle to Indian antiquarians. It was then that the year A.D.319-320 was accepted as the starting year of this important era. The dates of the Kushan Kings are still undecided. Again, if it were not for the identification of the Greek names Sandracottus, Xandrames and Palimbhotra with those of Chandragupta, Nanda, and Pataliputra respectively, the dates of the Mauryan Emperors might have remained a matter of dispute. This suggested synchronism was further corroborated by the mention of contemporary Greek kings in one of Asoka's inscriptions and the two facts together have now placed beyond all doubt the ques-

tion of the Mauryan chronology.

It is in regard to the settling of chronology therefore, that the accounts of the Greek writers have proved of inestimable value to the study of ancient Indian history. This does not, however, mean that the value of their writings in other respects should be underrated. *Foreigners' accounts* Indeed, we are indebted to the Greek and the Chinese writers for a great deal of our knowledge of the past history of our country. These foreign sources of information may be divided into the following classes :

1. Accounts of classical writers
2. Chinese accounts
3. Accounts of early Muslim writers

Amongst the earliest Greek writers in whose works we find casual references to India, are Herodotus and Ktesias who wrote their books in the 5th century B.C. None of these, perhaps, had any personal knowledge of India or the Indians. Their account of our country is based on hearsay. Later, in the 4th century B.C., however, we find ourselves on more sure ground. A number of writers, scientists, and explorers who came in the train of Alexander compiled accounts of what they had personally seen and observed in the country. Even though these original accounts have been lost, yet, ample fragments are preserved as extracts quoted in the writings of later classical authors. Similarly, long excerpts from Megasthenes' *Indica* quoted in their books by later authors throw a flood of light on the manners, customs and daily life of Indians of the 4th century B.C. Ptolemy's geography of India and the account of India's maritime trade in the first century A.D., from the pen of an unknown Greek author, are included amongst valuable sources of information.

Chinese literature, too, has made a good contribution to the reconstruction of the early history of India. The Chinese historical works contain numerous references to the movements and migrations of nomadic tribes living on China's borders and some of which eventually invaded India. These and other chronological references have been found helpful in building up the framework of Indian chronology. But more important than these casual references, are the itineraries of their travels left by Fa-hien, Hiuen Tsang and I-Tsing who visited India during the fifth and the seventh centuries of the Christian era.

Amongst foreign sources of information may, also, be included the inscriptional finds discovered in the islands of the Malay Archipelago and South Eastern Asia. Some of these are written in Sanskrit while others are in the language spoken in the island where these were composed viz., Javanese, Siamese Khmer, and Chamese. All these have been read and made to yield valuable information about the colonial activities of the Indians

and the spread of Indian culture beyond the borders of India. Mention may also be made, in this connection, of the explorations recently carried out by Sir Aurel Stein in the Tibetan region, and the rich treasures of art which have been unearthed from the long forgotten Buddhist monasteries.

Most of the knowledge we now have of ancient Indian history has been obtained by skilfully arranging, sifting and putting together the information collected from these various sources during the last fifty years. Thanks are due to the laborious researches of the devoted band of scholars, Indian, European and American, who have been patiently working at the subject for more than three quarters of a century.

As we pass from the ancient to the mediaeval period¹ our sources of information become comparatively more accurate.

Muhammadian Sources The Muslim writers were fond of chronicling the day to day events that came under their observation. They have left many diaries, letters and records which help us to reconstruct their history. Almost all the Muslim kings had their official chroniclers who recorded the events that happened at the court. Al-Utbi wrote an account of Mahmud of Ghazni, Minhaj-ud-Din Siraj gave a detailed account of the Ghoris, and Zia-ud-Din Barni's *Tarikh-i-Ferozshahi* narrates the events of Muhammad Tughlak and Ferozshah Tughlak. These men often write in a highly eulogistic style and exaggerate the achievements of their patrons, yet the historical value of their writings is great, since, a skilful and intelligent student of history can easily arrive at the truth after making necessary allowance for adulation. Besides the literary records, there is abundant material for an historian of the Muslim period in the shape of coins, inscriptions and monuments left by the Muhammadan rulers. Again, the accounts of foreign travellers and writers like Albiruni, Ibn Batuta, Abdur Razzak and Marco Polo furnish valuable information about India of the Mediaeval Age.

NOTES

(A) GEOGRAPHY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON HISTORY

The physical features of India have had a considerable share in moulding her civilization and in influencing the course of her political history. Shut off from the rest of the continent, India has developed a civilization which is distinctly her own. The unpassable high mountains in

¹ The accepted divisions or periods into which the history of India is divided are: (i) The Ancient Period which extends from the earliest times to approximately A.D. 1200, also known as the Hindu Period; (ii) the Mediaeval or the Muhammadan Period from 1200 to 1761; (iii) the period of Maratha ascendancy which might be dated from 1719 to 1818; (iv) the Modern or British Period from 1818 to the present day.

the north kept her comparatively safe from invasion from the side of Tibet and Turkistan and so also did the thick forests of the north-east. The only vulnerable points are situated in the mountain ranges in the north-west. All early invasions were, therefore, made from this side viz. from the gateways between Mekran in the South and Gilgit in the north. Again, so long as navy was not used as an arm of the military service till the 16th century, the oceans afforded protection to the country from the remaining three sides..

The long and wide northern plain of India which includes the Panjab, the Jumna Doab, the U.P., Bihar and Bengal is formed by the deposit of rich soil washed down from the Himalayas on one side and from the Vindhya on the other. This plain is also irrigated by many rivers (Indus and its tributaries and the Ganges and its affluents)—hence it has always been rich and easy of access. All big kingdoms, therefore, were founded in one or another part of this extensive plain; and so also were all centres of learning, trade and industries developed here. Taxila, Delhi (Indraprastha), Benares (Kasi), Allahabad (Prayag), Kanauj, Pataliputra, Ujjain, and Gwalior have all played an important part in the political and cultural history of the country. Again, the narrow gap of land (some 200 miles long) connecting Panjab and the Ganges plains has a marked strategic importance of its own. All decisive battles for the defence of the kingdoms situated in the Gangetic plain have been fought here; Kurukshetra, Tarain and Panipat.

The Deccan, protected by the Vindhya and Satpura ranges in the north and by the Eastern and Western Ghats on the two other sides, has almost always been separate from northern India, both politically and culturally. The population of the Deccan is predominantly Dravidian and so also are the spoken languages derived from the Dravidian stock, whereas the predominant element in the North Indian population is Aryan and the principal languages have all descended from one stock. (For detail of People and Languages, See P. 6-9 of the text).

(B) SOURCES OF HISTORY

(a) **Indigenous Literature.** There is very little material to construct political history of early India. The Vedic and Epic literature supply a data which is useful only for social and cultural history of the people. The Buddhist and the Jain literature too, are of similar nature and character. The Puranas, no doubt, contain names and pedigrees of Kings, but in matters of dates, sequence and order, the Puranic information is not very accurate and reliable. The biographical sketches and the bardic poems can be made to yield some historical material but even this needs a good deal of intelligent sifting since it contains elements of fiction and romance. The purely historical works are few and relate to much later period. (b) Among the other indigenous sources are (i) Inscriptions, (ii) Coins and (iii) Monuments. These are, indeed, valuable. But even here the difficulty is that of assigning accurate dates (See pages 10-12 of the text). (c) **Foreign Sources.** The writings of the Greeks, Romans, Chinese and Arabs constitute another important source for the history of our country. More important among these are the accounts of Megasthenes, Ptolemy, Fa-hien, Hieun Tsang, I-Tsing and Albiruni.

For the history of the Muhammadan Period the difficulties and shortcomings experienced in connection with the Hindu Period no longer exist. There is abundance of contemporary historical literature. The Kings had their court historians. Although their writings are not free from bias, exaggerations and colourful descriptions, yet it is easier to sift facts from this material. (For details of each reign, See P. 10 of the text). Similarly, the numismatic material is more reliable and accurate. The coins of the kings bear specific dates of issue. The architectural monuments of this period are also well-preserved and in many cases bear the dates on their portals.

QUESTIONS

1. In what manner and to what extent has the political, cultural and economic history of India been influenced by the geographical conditions of the country? Illustrate your answer with facts from history.
2. What are the elements that contribute to the unity of the country and what are those which contribute towards its diversity?
3. Enumerate the various sources of the history of the Hindu Period and examine the value of each from the point of view of its accuracy and reliability.
4. Describe and discuss the nature of the sources of history of the period of the Delhi Sultanate.]

CHAPTER II

The Aryans—their Civilization and Culture

The first important fact known in the history of India is that nearly five thousand years ago, an orderly and well-established civilization existed in the valley of the Indus. Our knowledge of this fact is based on archæological explorations which were carried out by the Indian Archæological Department at Mohen-jo-Daro (Sind) and at Harappa (Panjab) during the years 1920-22. These explorations have, indeed, brought to light a rich wealth of historical material which enables us to form a vivid picture of the standard of civilization attained by the people living in this region during the third millennium before Christ. It comprises the remains of large buildings and dwelling houses, weapons of war, household implements, food-material and dress materials, personal ornaments, spinning and textile instruments, many types of earthenware vessels, domestic articles like toys and games, clay models of domesticated and wild animals, bronze, clay and stone statuettes, and most important of all, seals and other objects with engravings and pictographic alphabet.

*The Indus
Valley
Civilization*

This kind of material and the abundance in which it has been discovered is sufficient to justify the conclusion that the people of the Panjab and Sind were living in those remote times in well built houses¹ and were in possession of a mature culture with a high standard of art and craftsmanship and a developed system of pictographic writing. Their food consisted chiefly of wheat, barley and dates, besides fish from the river. They also had domesticated the cow, the buffalo and the goat for milk and other purposes. They knew how to grow cotton and make their garments by spinning and weaving this material. From a couple of male statuettes which have been discovered, it appears that men wore beautiful dresses decorated with floral designs; and that they used to wear a close trimmed beard but shaved their upper lip. The steatite figure further reveals well dressed hair kept in position by a fillet which is rather rare to the sex. The women of Mohen-jo-Daro appear to have been

*Life and
habits of the
Indus People*

¹ These houses are built of baked bricks set in mud or gypsum mortar. The streets in Mohen-jo-Daro were laid out in great regularity. One of the most striking buildings is a large pillared hall probably, a place for public meetings. Another equally prominent building in the town is a great public bath with ancillary buildings.

fond of ornaments. A bronze figurine representing a female dancer has the whole arm covered with bangles and bracelets. Besides this, quantities of jewellery were found in the dwelling houses at Mohen-jo-Daro. It comprises girdles, necklaces, bracelets, bangles, anklets, finger rings, as well as ear and nose ornaments made of various materials like copper, silver, gold and ivory. More than twenty different varieties of precious and semiprecious stones used for ornamental purposes have also been discovered and the skill with which these have been worked upon reveals, indeed, an advanced stage of craftsmanship. In matters of personal habits, the evidence of the finds shows that the people of Mohen-jo-Daro were scrupulously clean. Almost every house was provided with a well and a bathing room besides the public bathing places. The system of drainage of these towns was so perfect that it has excited the admiration of modern sanitary engineers.

In regard to games and other amusements, it appears from a large variety of toys found in Mohen-jo-Daro that the children and adults of the city were as fond of games and toys as they are in Sind at the present day. The game of dicing seems to have been a common pastime for adults.

The weapons of war so far discovered comprise axes, maces, spears, bows and arrows together with a couple of copper swords¹ not more than two feet in length.

The race and religion of the people of Mohen-jo-Daro will remain a baffling historical problem so long as the script on the seals and sealings is not deciphered. The clay sealings and the variety of engraved seal-amulets which have been found among the ruins have all sorts of quaint figures engraved on them. The terracotta figurines also represent human and semi-human figures. Many of these, on comparison, look like the gods and goddesses of Egypt and Mesopotamia; and this fact has led to the surmise that they represent the deities of the Mohen-jo-Daro people. Among the figurines discovered in the two towns are a large number of female characters in various postures and attitudes, similar to those which have been found in Baluchistan, Mesopotamia, Elam and Egypt. In regard to these female figurines the view of the archæologist is that they are symbolical of the cult of the Divine Mother or Earth-goddess. There is, however, another seal which represents a male figure seated on a throne cross-legged in the posture of a *Yogi*. The head of this figure is three-faced and is reminiscent of the *Trimurti* or the three-faced Shiva. Like the God Shiva, again, round about this portrayed figure may be seen the effigies of four animals, an elephant, a tiger, a buffalo, and a rhinoceros.

*Religion of
the Indus
People*

¹ Probably the use of iron was not known to the Indus Valley people.

Below the figure are seen two-horned deer looking up to the figure which remind us of Shiva's epithet of Pasupati or the Lord of beasts. Among the ruins were also found a large number of pieces of stone of various shapes and sizes, many of which have the form and appearance of what we call a Shiva Linga. Does this represent the Shiva cult? Evidences of tree, serpent, and river worship have also been discovered at Mohenjo-Daro. But, as remarked above, we should guard ourselves against accepting these hypotheses about the religious beliefs of the people, till the written characters on the seals have been deciphered.

Another equally interesting, though speculative, problem connected with the Indus valley civilization is the determination of the race of the people who inhabited this valley in that remote age. Several theories have been advanced

*Aryans or
Dravidians*

on this point. Some Indian scholars hold the view that the Indus culture represents the culture of the Vedic Aryans. Others hold that it is closely allied to the Sumerian culture and they identify the Indus people with the Sumerians and the Dravidians. The fact is that, so far, no definite or adequate evidence, whether anthropological, ethnical or of any other character is forthcoming in support of either of these views.

For the Aryans who are believed to have come and settled in India in the remote past we possess no such archæological data as have just been described in regard to the people of the Indus valley. The only available material from which we can derive our knowledge of them is the Rigveda—the book which is regarded as the oldest in the library of man.

*The coming
of the Aryans*

When and from where the Aryans came to India are amongst the other historical puzzles concerning the past history of our country. The question of their immigration to India was first raised by Sir William Jones, a judge of the Supreme Court of Calcutta. This learned scholar discovered a very close similarity between Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Old Persian and the Gothic and Celtic languages,¹ and put forward the view that they all must have sprung from a common source. Working on this hypothesis, scholars came to believe that the people who spoke these languages must have lived, at one time, in a common country and subsequently dispersed, migrated and settled in different countries where we find them to-day.

The next problem, therefore, that engaged the attention of

¹ Sir William Jones read his paper before the Asiatic Society of Bengal in A.D. 1786. The Sanskrit words *pitar* and *matar* are essentially the same as the Persian '*pidar*' and '*mader*', the Latin '*pater*' and '*mater*', the Greek '*pater*' and '*meter*', the English '*father*' and '*mother*' and the German '*vater*' and '*mutter*'.

the antiquarians was the investigation of this common home or "the original habitat" of the community which spoke these languages, and the probable date of their dispersal from this habitat. Since the beginning of this investigation many views have been put forward as to the geographical position of this early community though none has, so far, been considered and accepted as final. Austria, Hungary, the southern plains of Russia, the Arctic regions,¹ eastern Turkistan, Tibet² and the Panjab (or more precisely the Saptasindhu³) have been variously suggested as the original home of the Indo-European people before their dispersion took place. When and for what reasons they left their original habitat will also remain an equally baffling problem. It is generally held by scholars that the dispersion did not take place at one time, but wave after wave of the migrants followed each other at not very long intervals, for otherwise the first migrants were likely to be destroyed by the peoples living in the country where these migrants came to settle.⁴

One point, however, on which there seems to be general agreement among scholars and for which there is overwhelming evidence in the Rigveda and the Avesta (the sacred book of the Old Persians) is that the Indo-Iranian Group Indo-Iranian group⁵ at least lived together for a very long time and were, perhaps, the last to part company. The names of men of these two groups of people and those of the gods whom they worshipped bear a striking resemblance. Mitra, Indra and Varuna occur in the Rigveda as well as in the Avesta and so also the names of some of the kings like Yashdatta and Dashratta occur in the sacred scriptures of the Aryans and the

1 Mr. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the renowned Indian patriot and scholar has tried to prove that the Vedic Aryans started their exodus from the Arctic region. See Tilak's Arctic Home in the Vedas.

2 Swami Dayanand Saraswati in Satyarth Prakash and F. E. Pargiter in Ancient Indian Historical Traditions P. 302 have put forward this view.

3 The land watered by the Indus and its tributaries which includes the Panjab and the Valley of Kashmir in the north and the Gandhara in the west. This view is advocated with much force and reason by A. C. Das in his Rigvedic India.

4 Mr. Tilak maintains that the Aryan race migrated from the Arctic region about 8000 B.C.; and its Asiatic branch finally settled in Central Asia about 6000 B.C.

5 The word 'Arya' means 'noble and of good family,' and was originally applied by those who composed the Vedic hymns to distinguish their own people from those of the earlier inhabitants of India whom they called 'Dasas or Dasyus.' The distinction was even otherwise marked. The Aryas were 'white-skinned, aquilinenosed, of high stature,' whereas the Dasas were 'dark-skinned, flatnosed and of short-stature.' The European historians have further classified the 'Arya family' as Indo-Europeans to denote those who settled in different countries of Europe; Indo-Iranians who settled in Iran; and Indo-Aryans who settled in India. Recently however, the word *Wiros* has been coined to denote the entire 'Arya family.'

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Iranians.¹

The only sources from which we derive our knowledge of the Indo-Aryans is their sacred literature known as the Vedic literature. It comprises the four Vedic Samhitas and other allied compositions like the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, the Upanishadas, the Sutras, the Vedangas and the Upavedas. The four Samhitas are Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Atharva. Of these, the Rigveda Samhita is regarded as the oldest; in fact, the oldest literary monument in the literature of the world. It contains 1,017 hymns arranged in ten books or *Mandala*.² The Samaveda consists, for the most part, of hymns taken from the Rigveda and has little or no independent historical value. The hymns are arranged mainly with a reference to their utility in the performance of the Soma sacrifice, and for this purpose are set to music or special tunes. The Yajur, like the Sama, also borrows much material from the Rigveda. The prayer hymns thus borrowed are put in the order in which they were to be recited at the time of certain sacrifices. The prose portion of the Yajur, however, gives a good deal of information about the sacrificial ritual. The Atharvaveda, though not so valuable as a piece of literary work, is important from the standpoint of the development of Aryan civilization and culture. It contains hymns dealing mostly with popular spells and charms for keeping away demons, diseases and enemies and thus preserves a strata of popular cults and superstitions which were being added to the original Aryan beliefs.

The Brahmanas are essentially in prose and were designed to explain the meaning and substance of the Vedic texts. These are, in a way, commentaries on the Samhitas written by learned priests. Each of the four Samhitas has its own Brahmana or commentary. The need for writing these explanatory or help-books was, probably, felt at the time when the old language in which the Rigveda was composed came to be forgotten and new forms of speech came in vogue.

The Aranyakas are treatises written in addition to the Brahmanas to give directions to the priests regarding the performance of Yajnas, etc. But besides these directions, the Aranyakas also contained expositions offered by the most learned men of the age on life and its allied problems, like creation, birth, death, matter, soul and God. Since these subtle and speculative prob-

¹ The Boghaz-koi inscription believed to date about 1400 B.C. records treaties between the Hittites and Kings of Mitani, and the gods whom these people worshipped are invoked as witnesses and protectors of the contracts. The gods are mentioned as In-da-ra (Indra), Mi-it-ra (Mitra) and U-ru-w-na (Varuna). It is clear from these documents that Vedic gods were worshipped in Asia Minor at least as early as 1400 B.C.

² All these hymns are believed to have been composed by the families of the Rishis like Vishwamitra, Bhardwaj and Vashista. The Hindu belief is that the word of God was directly revealed to these Rishis.

lems required sustained concentration, the sages who chose to tackle them always retired into forests (*Aranya*) far away from crowded cities and haunts of men—hence the books they made were called *Aranyakas* or forest-books.

The speculative subjects treated in the *Aranyakas* were more fully dealt with in the class of works called the *Upanishadas*.

The Upanishadas Nearly two hundred of these books have been preserved. They belong to different ages and show many strata in style, language and thought. Since these books came at the end of the *Brahmanas* and the *Aranyakas* they are also called *Vedanta* or the end of the *Vedas*. The *Upanishadas* are regarded as one of the most remarkable compositions of the human mind and are rightly cherished by the Hindus as their proudest national possession. Indeed, they contain sublime speculations and inquiries into the mysteries of nature, the universal soul, the life here and the life hereafter. The *Vedas*, the *Brahmanas*, the *Aranyakas*, and the *Upanishadas* are together classed as the *Shruti* or the revealed literature.

In addition to the *Shruti* or the revealed literature, there is another body of literature which every pious Hindu considers

it his duty to study. This comprises the *Upavedas* and the *Vedangas*. The *Upavedas* deal with four secular subjects, namely: (i) *Ayur-veda* or medicine, (ii) *Dhanur-veda* or military science, (iii) *Gandharva-veda* or music and (iv) *Shilpa-veda* or architecture and arts.

The Upavedas and the Vedangas The *Vedangas* comprise six groups of treatises relating to (i) *Shiksha* or phonetics, (ii) *Chhandas* or metre, (iii) *Vyakarna* or grammar, (iv) *Nirukta* or etymology, (v) *Jyotish* or astronomy and (vi) *Kalpa* or practice of religion. The *Vedangas* are composed in *Sutra* style. The *Upavedas* and the *Vedangas* are collectively known as the *Smriti* or literature handed down by tradition from olden times to distinguish it from *Shruti* or the revealed literature.

The problem of determining the date of composition of the Vedic literature is one of the most difficult problems concerning

The age of the Vedas the history of ancient India. Even the best scholars, Indian and foreign differ on this point; and the difference in the dates assigned by them

is, unfortunately, not of years or centuries but of millenniums. Professor Max Muller who first dealt with this question in a critical manner held that this mass of literature must have taken many centuries for its composition and fixed the lowest limit by which this process was completed at approximately 1000 B.C. He felt, however, that in the absence of any positive data, the position taken up by him was untenable; and he expressly observed that "the question whether this date should be fixed as

1000, 1500, 2000 or 3000 years before Christ can never be solved." And yet, strange to say, later scholars have, without offering any new arguments, regarded 1000 B.C.—which was merely looked upon by Max Muller as the probable minimum limit—as the date of the composition of the Rigveda Samhita which is the oldest collection of hymns in this literature. On the other hand, scholars like Professor Jacobi and Mr. Bal Gangadhar Tilak have, with the help of astronomical references in the Rigveda come to the conclusion that some of these hymns were composed at least 4000 years before Christ. Prof. Winternitz who is regarded as the latest authority on the subject argues that on historical grounds the age of the Rigveda must be placed nearer the date assumed by Jacobi and Tilak rather than that suggested by Max Muller. Thus, from what has been said above it will not be possible to assign precise dates to the composition of the Vedas, yet the period between 2500 to 1200 B.C. may be regarded as a fair approximation.

The geographical allusions in the Rigveda seem to show that the Aryans, during this period, were familiar with the country extending from Afghanistan to the Gangetic valley. There are frequent allusions to the rivers Kabul, Swat, Kuram and Gomul. Similarly the plains of the Panjab watered by the river Indus and its tributaries appear to have been very well known to the Aryans of the Rigvedic period. The Ganga and the Yamuna (Jumna) are also mentioned but only twice or thrice, which shows that some settlements of the Aryans had been established in the Gangetic plain but it was still not a very familiar land. Amongst the mountains, frequent mention is made of the Himalayas and some of its peaks but Rigveda knows nothing of the Vindhya and other mountain ranges of India. Similarly amongst the rivers the name of Narbada does not occur. It may, therefore be inferred that in the Rigvedic age, the Aryans had not yet established settlements in the southern direction nor had they yet advanced towards the east beyond a part of the Jumna Doab.

The first settlements of the Aryans

The Aryans developed a healthy, social and political life within this region. The family rather than the individual was regarded as the social and political unit, with the senior male member as its head and priest who had all the prerogatives as well as the duties of a Roman *pater familias*. He and his wife together performed all religious ceremonies, for, in those times women were held in great respect. They must have been educated, for some ladies are mentioned as composers of hymns and had risen to the rank of Rishis or learned sages. There was no *pardah* system as is known in the present day. The girls, sometimes at least, chose their own husbands with the consent of

Social customs in Vedic times

their parents. "The woman gentle in nature and graceful in form selects from among many, her own loved one as her husband." (Rigveda) Polygamy was allowed in ancient India as it was allowed among all ancient nations, but, was probably, confined to kings and great chiefs only. The ordinary people were content with one wife.

Of the games and amusements of the Vedic Aryans, special mention must be made of chariot racing, hunting and dicing. Dancing and music accompanied by the lute, flute and drum was a common pastime of the people on festive occasions.

Society was still in its infancy and not yet marked by any hard and fast divisions into ranks. The same chiefs who owned large fields in times of peace distinguished themselves as leaders of men in times of war, and returned home from their victories to worship their gods at the domestic altars. Almost all able-bodied men were warriors who ploughed their fields in time of peace.

The food of the Rigvedic Aryans consisted chiefly of milk, curd, butter or ghee, grain flour, honey, vegetables and fruits.

Diet Animal food was also used, probably, on special occasions. Besides these articles of diet there are two kinds of drinks which are mentioned in the Rigveda namely, the Soma and the Sura. The Soma juice was extracted from a plant, while the Sura or the Iranian Hura was probably a spirit distilled from corn and barley. But it must be mentioned in this connection that those who indulged in drinks are often blamed in the hymns for doing this. "Anger, dice and Sura" the Veda declares, "are said to cause men to sin."

Reference in the Rigveda shows that agriculture was the main industry of the Aryans, as it is of the people of modern India.

Economic organization They ploughed the fields as cultivators do to-day, by means of a pair of oxen bound to the yoke—a process which has continued unaltered for the last four thousand years. There are copious hymns devoted to ploughing, in which the Vedic Aryan invoked the blessings of his gods for plenty of crops and rains and the welfare of his cattle. Barley and wheat were the principal produce of the field, but oil seeds and cotton were also cultivated. Rice was, perhaps, not so extensively grown.

Besides agriculture, the simple arts of a civilized life were practised by the Aryans of the Rigveda. We read of weavers of wool and cotton together with the workers in the subsidiary industries of dyeing and embroidery. To armour and helmets, javelins, swords and arrows there are innumerable references. Three thousand warriors covered with mail are spoken of in one remarkable hymn.

Trade was carried on both by land and by water. The word

that occurs for a boat is *nau-s*¹. Coins were, probably, unknown and the trade was carried by a system of barter.

Like several other aspects of their daily life, the religion of the early Aryans was also plain and simple. They worshipped various powers and manifestations of nature, such as the Sun, the Moon, the Sky, the Dawn, Thunder, Wind and the Air. These forces were looked upon as all-powerful and as living beings whose favour could be won by prayer and sacrifice.

*Religion of
the Aryans*

Hence the Yajnas or sacrifices form an essential part of the Aryan creed. The performance of a Yajna was invariably accompanied by devout prayers and the chanting of hymns. Agni or fire was regarded as the messenger between the worshipper and his god. Oblations or offerings consisting of ordinary food, drink and butter were therefore thrown into the fire. Such was the simple form of worship which every Aryan child could perform. There were no temples, no altars, and no images and no hereditary priests. In course of time, however, elaborate rituals were introduced and the views of the Aryans about nature and divinity also reveal a definite change. In the later hymns of the Rigveda, one finds unmistakable indications of monotheism, *i.e.* the worship of one God which has continued to be the true religion of the Hindus for over four thousand years. God is described as *One* in these hymns. "The gods are one and the same, only the sages describe them differently." (Rigveda). Thus, the idea of a single supreme power governing and controlling the universe seems finally to have emerged and to have superseded the earlier conception of a number of deities co-ordinating in their work of controlling the great cosmic phenomena. The religion of the Rigvedic Aryans may thus be regarded as a progressive religion, progressing 'from Nature to Nature's God.'

In early Vedic times the family (*kula*) formed a social and political unit. The father was the head of the family and ruled it. As the family became larger, the sons went off and became fathers of other families. All these families who were related to one another now formed a clan (*vis*) but still obeyed the authority of the first father while he lived and of his senior male representative after his death. The clan in the same way grew into a tribe (*Jana*) whose members were bound together by real or supposed ties of kinship. Various tribes of this kind are mentioned in the Rigveda. Finally a number of tribes grew into a nation under a king. The family, the clan, the tribe and the nation seems to have been a natural process of development.

Political organization

The government of the tribal state or settlement was organised

¹ It will be interesting to note that the Sanskrit word *nau-s* has a great resemblance to the Latin word, *navis*, and the English word, *nary*.

in imitation of the Aryan family. The chief of the whole settlement was the King or Rajan, and his position was in many instances hereditary. He had a tribal council to advise him in all important matters, whether social, religious or political. The members of this council were, probably, the heads of the clans and some others who were held in esteem for their honesty, integrity and wisdom. There is no evidence to show that the King was regarded as the owner of the lands of his kingdom. But to carry on the government of the state, the tribesmen did give their king a share of their income. This share was primarily the produce of their land. The main concern and duty of the Raja was to afford protection to the tribesmen in times of peace and to lead them in times of war. He also acted as the representative of his tribe on public occasions and religious functions such as the performance of a sacrifice offered to the gods to ensure victory to the tribe. Besides the Raja, the three other State officials who are pretty frequently mentioned in the Rigveda are the *Senani*, the *Gramani*, and the *Purohita*. The *Senani* was a military commander appointed by the King; and the *Gramani* or leader of a *grama* (village) seems to have been a village officer who exercised both civil and military functions. The *Purohita* or the priest was the Brahmin adviser of the King and occupied a position of great dignity in the State. "He was," as Professor Keith puts it, "the forerunner of the Brahmin statesmen of later times."

Besides this kingly form of government, we also find other forms of tribal governments in the Rigveda. In some of these there is no one person who exercises all the functions of government but the executive authority is vested in common in several members of the ruling family. Some tribes had a kind of democratic organization and their rulers or chiefs were elected by the tribesmen. But whatever the form of government, the head of the State was nowhere absolute. His power was limited and controlled by the *Samiti* or assembly of the people formed on the basis of the tribe, the district and the nation.

The Rigveda is full of allusions to the prolonged conflict which the Aryan invaders had to wage against the original settlers of the country. How their experienced and renowned warriors led the invading hosts to wrest lands and cattle from the aborigines, and how they used to invoke the blessings of their gods before and during the war, forms, indeed, an interesting study. The soldiers, as these references would show, used to protect themselves by shields, coats of mail and helmets. Their offensive weapons chiefly consisted of bows and arrows, swords, spears and axes as well as lances and slings. The foot-soldiers used to fight in close lines, whereas the leaders fought in chariots drawn by horses. The drums and trumpets were used to supply

*The mode of
Warfare*

war music. It may also be mentioned in this connection that the Aryan tribes had not only to fight against the aborigines, but, not infrequently they fought with one another.

NOTES

(a) **The Indus Valley People.** The excavations at the ancient sites of Mohen-jo-Daro and Harappa have pushed back the history of Indian civilization to 3500 B.C. Although it cannot yet be stated with precision whether the people living in these regions were the Aryans, Dravidians, or Sumerians; the fact remains that they had attained a high degree of civilization. They knew the art of planning towns and the art of writing; they had definite religious beliefs and had developed great sense of personal and public hygiene.

(b) **The Aryans.** Who the Aryans were, from which place they migrated to India and when and why they did so, are some of the unsolved riddles of history and will, probably, remain as such. The literature which the Aryans have left to posterity is, indeed, voluminous and valuable. It is classified in two main groups viz: Shruti and Smriti. Though devoted more to the exposition of moral and spiritual subjects, the Vedic literature contains frequent references to the daily life of the Aryan people, their manners and customs, their social and political organization, their trade and occupation, their mode of warfare and their views about Nature, God and Soul. These references, when put together enable us to construct a vivid picture of the ancient Aryan society of the Vedic days.

QUESTIONS

1. Write a short note on the Indus Valley culture as revealed from the relics excavated at Mohen-jo-Daro and Harappa.
2. "From Nature to Nature's God" sums up the religious beliefs of the Rigvedic Aryans. Elucidate.
3. Review the state of Aryan society as it is revealed in the Vedas.
4. In which parts of India were the first Aryan settlements made?

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CHAPTER III

Later Vedic and Epic Periods. 1000 – 600 B.C.

SECTION 1. RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

In the last chapter we have described the story of the settlement of the Aryans in India, their social, political and economic organization, and the main features of their domestic and religious life as derived from the study of the Rigveda. For the period following that of the Rigveda, our chief source again is the religious literature. It consists of the

Sources of its history

Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, the Upanishadas and the two Epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The dates of the composition of these works are uncertain but the oldest of them are, without doubt, only little removed in point of time from the latest parts of the Rigveda, while the rest of the group are certainly earlier than 600 B.C. Taken together, therefore, the later Vedic literature and the Epics enable us to form some idea of the developments which had occurred in the course of about four or five hundred years from 1000 to 600 B.C.

During this period of five centuries, as we shall presently see, changes of great significance were taking place in society. It

Importance of the period

was during the course of these years that some of the very important aspects of Hinduism were developed, namely the belief in eternity; the sacerdotal character of religion; the Varna and

Ashrama Dharma; the doctrines of Punarjanma, Karma and Moksha. Again, it was during this period that the old tribal chiefships of the Rigvedic age were being transformed into large national kingdoms and the simple codes of tribal customs were being replaced by regular codes and manuals of laws. Considered from an historical point of view, therefore, this period is, indeed, important.

In the previous chapter we noticed that towards the close of the Rigvedic period, the idea and conception of one God was

Religion in the later vedic age

gaining ground. This idea became more developed in the later age; and the Upanishadas have worked out the doctrine of monotheism at some

length. The idea of a universal soul is, in fact, the key-stone of the philosophy and thought of the Upanishadas: the Universal Being 'from whom all things have emanated, of whom all things are a part and into whom all things will ultimately resolve.'

Another change that took place during this period was the elaboration of the rites and ceremonies concerning the old Vedic religion. In the olden days the ways of worship and the performance of Yajnas were a simple affair which every house-holder could do. Even on the occasion of public sacrifices, a tribal chief himself used to act as the high priest. In the later age, however, the ceremonial side of religion became more complicated and also more expensive. The belief that gods were propitiated by Yajnas led to an increase in the number, variety and splendour of sacrifices. The right spirit of religion and worship thus began to be neglected and its place was being taken by greater attention to the details of the ceremonials connected with religion and worship.

Two other ideas namely that of the transmigration of soul and the Law of Karma, which form an important basis of Hinduism, are also clearly and systematically explained and taught, for the first time, in the Upanishadas. Other nations have believed in the Resurrection of the Soul; the Hindus believed in the past as well as in the future existence of the soul. According to this doctrine, the same soul, after the death of a person, passes into another body and again into another and so on, before it can be freed from all its imperfections and mingle in the Universal Soul. Allied with this idea was that of Karma, which lays down that no act or deed is lost and that all actions, good or bad, bear their proper fruit and help their authors up or down the scale of transmigration. In other words, the theory of Karma attempts to establish connection between one birth and the other; and also explains that the conditions of birth (good or bad) in this endless chain of existences are dependant upon the good or bad deeds of a person. These two doctrines have played a prominent part in the foundation of Buddhism and Jainism.

Closely connected with the doctrines of Karma and Punarjanma is the doctrine of Moksa. When the Hindus came to believe that after death man is born again, and again he dies and is born again, they were naturally confronted with the problem of the ultimate destiny of the soul. Was it bound for ever to this unending chain of births and deaths or was a release of the soul from the body a possibility? It was the investigation of this obstruse problem that led to the Hindu belief in the doctrine of Moksa. Moksa is defined as a state of "birthlessness and deathlessness;" a point of time in the journey of the soul when it is liberated from the cycle of births and deaths and becomes merged in the Universal Soul. It was this ideal of Moksa which a man was required to keep before his mind and it was to attain this ideal

that he was expected to strive.¹

The beginning of an investigation of these subtle problems, as we have said before, was made by the authors of the Upanishadas, but a systematic and more logical examination of them is made in the works collectively known as the "six systems of philosophy."

*Six schools
of Hindu
Philosophy*

These are (i) the Sankhya School of Kapila, (ii) the Yoga system of Patanjali, (iii) the Nyaya School of Gautama, (iv) the Vaisheshak system of Kanada, (v) the Purvamimansa of Jaimini, and (vi) the Uttar Mimansa of Vyasa.

Kapila, the founder of the Sankhya system, lived, probably, about 600 B.C. and was the first to challenge the accepted views about God, Matter and Soul. He has expounded his own views with great clarity and precision. He finds no room for God in his scheme of the universe; and holds that Prakriti and Atman, viz. Nature and Soul, are the only two real things that always *have* been and always *will* be. They are self-existent and indestructible. They have an affinity for each other and the union of the two explains the beginning of the creation. The soul of a man lives for a time in a body, and then goes into a higher or lower animal, or even into a plant, according to the good or bad that he has done. He believes in the theory of Transmigration and the law of Karma as expounded in the Upanishadas. He also accepts Moksa, or the final liberation of the soul from its earthly bondage, as its goal, and holds that when any soul becomes perfect it goes no more into any body, but lives apart as a soul for ever. Kapila is indifferent to the existence of God and attaches no importance to the Vedic rites and ceremonies.

An agnostic system of philosophy in which God and the Vedas had no place, did not satisfy the average Hindu mind, and a couple of centuries after, another celebrated philosopher, named Patanjali, expounded his own system called the Yoga system. Patanjali while he agrees with Kapila that Matter and Soul are eternal, says further that God is also eternal and is supreme over Matter and Soul. Like Kapila again, Patanjali holds that Moksa is the goal or the ultimate objective but to attain that objective and liberate the soul from the body one has to meditate on God. It is this constant meditation or Yoga that alone will help the soul on its path of salvation. He prescribes certain mystic practices by which one could obtain control over the functions of the mind and thus facilitate the process of fixing

¹ It may be mentioned that the problem of life hereafter or of what becomes of man after death has always faced humanity. The doctrine of Resurrection was nothing more than a solution of this very problem offered and accepted by the Semitic nations and the doctrine of Moksa and Transmigration offered by the Hindus. The practice of embalming dead bodies and burying them under the Pyramids by the Egyptians of old was started with a view to preserve the dead so that everything should not end for the man with death.

the mind on God and setting the soul free from the body.

The Nyaya system is chiefly the system of logic. It was propounded by Gautama. Like Kapila and Patanjali, Gautama also considered the Moksha or the emancipation of the soul as the highest ideal of existence. Like the two schools again, the Nyaya School believes in the Law of Karma, namely, that the soul must reap the fruit of its good and bad actions. Gautama, like Patanjali, also places God above soul and holds that He is eternal and is the creator of the Universe. The main subject discussed in Gautama's system of logic is, of what things is it possible to obtain a knowledge (*jnan*) and what is the criterion of right knowledge.

Gautama was followed by Kanada who advocated what is known as the Vaisheshak system. In Kanada's system, too, there seems to be little or no room for God. The cardinal principle of his philosophy is that all material substances are aggregations of atoms. The atoms are eternal, they never perish. It is the aggregations only that perish by disintegration. The atoms are invisible but they unite under an unseen law (*adrishta*). They are not under the will of God. They gradually assume a form. In this manner, the great earth is produced by the earth atoms, the sea is produced from aqueous atoms, light is produced by the union of luminous atoms and so on. Kanada also advocates that it is the knowledge or realization that helps in the liberation of the soul from the body and that the performance of Yajnas and other Vedic rites are not of material help.

The two Mimansa Schools come last in the chronological order, and represent an attempt on the part of the conservative element in Hindu society to counteract the tendency towards agnosticism and heterodoxy which was brought about by the teachings of Kapila and Kanada. "Back to the Vedas and the Vedic rites," was the watchword of the Mimansa Schools. Jaimini, the celebrated author of the Purva Mimansa has tried to prove, with considerable acumen and reasoning, that the Vedas are eternal and revealed, hence superior and more authoritative than the words of philosophers. The performance of Vedic rites are essential and obligatory to man. The Uttar Mimansa of Vyasa is supplementary to the School of Jaimini. This school lays great stress on the Supreme Spirit or God as opposed to the previous schools of philosophy which held Matter as eternal. Unlike the previous philosophers who held that Matter and Soul are two different things, the author of Uttar Mimansa holds that Matter and Soul are one and the same. On the other hand, Vyasa holds that Matter is unreal or Maya. All beings in Nature, he advocates, are only different manifestations of the Supreme Being. "The sea is one and not other than its waters; yet waves, foam, spray, drops, froth and other modifications of it differ from each other." "As milk changes into curd, and water into ice, so

is Brahma the Universal Being, variously transformed."

Besides the six systems described above there are three other systems of philosophy which are collectively known as heterodox schools. These are: the Jains, the Buddhist and the Charvak. The Jain and Buddhist philosophy will be considered in the next chapter.

The Charvak system is based on materialism pure and simple. It denies the existence of God and does not believe in Soul as a separate entity from the body. The Charvaks believe only in Matter as a reality. "The Soul," they say "is born with the body and dies with the body. The Soul, in fact, is only the body alive." So long as man lives, let him live happily, is the principle of the Charvaks. The Veda, and the Vedic rites are only the fancies of men, particularly of the Brahmins who have made all the rules for sacrifices, etc. to serve their own interests.

Thus it became the chief recognised object of most of the learned scholars and philosophers of the age to discover some means of delivering the human soul from its unending pilgrimage and all the principal systems of Indian philosophy, probably, had their rise in such attempts. They all deal with the most obstruse problems of God, Matter, Soul, Creation, Death, the Past, the Present, and the Future; and reveal the high pitch of fertility to which the Hindu mind had reached more than 2500 years ago.

As the foregoing paragraphs show, people enjoyed complete liberty of expression of their theological beliefs and some even ventured to deny the existence of God and ignore the supremacy of the Vedas and the Vedic rites. Yet we find that there existed rules and regulations for regulating the everyday life of the individual member of society. A series of

acts which an average man or woman was expected to perform in the whole span of his or her life was laid down.¹ A man's life for instance, was divided into four Ashrams or Periods, in each of which he had a sort of programme of duties mapped out for him. The first Period up to the age of 25 comprised a period of study; the second which was also of the same duration of time required a man to live a householder's life; during the third he had to wean himself from his wife and children and lead the life of an ascetic, and in the fourth and last he was expected to live as a hermit in the woods. That this division of an Aryan's life was actually put into practice we have ample evidence in the literature of the age. In fact, the best of the philosophic works in Sanskrit literature are the productions of the ascetics and the hermits who, removed far from the din of city life, brought

¹ These acts are embodied in what are known as the Grihya Sutras and the Dharma Sutras.

their mature mind to bear on the speculative problems of life here and life hereafter. The presence of a band of such pious selfless and learned men must also have exercised a very healthy influence upon the moral tone of society.

Side by side with the Ashramdharma there also developed what is known as the Varnadharma or the division of society into four Castes namely the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Sudras. The *The caste system* division of a man's life into four Periods and of the entire people into four Castes is peculiar to India and exists nowhere else in the world.¹ In what manner and at what time exactly this division of society into castes originated is difficult to say. There is little doubt, however, that in its very early stages, the Indo-Aryans had no such social or professional groups. They formed a more or less homogeneous mass of people. The only distinction that existed at this time was that between the fair-skinned Aryans and the dark-coloured aborigines. The old pride of a conqueror was retained by the Aryan and made him unwilling to allow the fusion of his race with that of the conquered Dasyu. Purity of blood and colour was his great concern. Further grouping of the Aryan society into Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas took place later and the process began much on the lines of evolution. As the tribal chiefs developed into big territorial rulers there came a change in their mode of life. They now lived in august and pompous courts and loved to perform religious rites on an equally elaborate and pompous scale. This involved strict adherence to the details of forms and formulæ; but, with the lapse of time, the sacred hymns and their exact significance had become unintelligible to an average man. All this, therefore, furnished enough work for a class of specialists and such a body arose in the descendants of the old priests. They undertook to perform these elaborate ceremonies on behalf of the Aryan princes and composed songs to applaud their triumphs and victories. They devoted their life to learning these rites and acquired special knowledge to perform them in all their details. The inference in the popular mind, therefore, was that they alone were worthy of the holy task. This accounts for the rise of the Brahmin caste and also for the recognition that the highest place in the social organisation belonged to the members of this class.

In a similar manner there also arose the Kshatriya caste. In the days of tribal groups every able-bodied man went to war

¹ Similar distinctions of classes have, from time to time, crept in among other nations but have nowhere acquired the inflexible rigidity of the caste system of India. In Europe, for instance, in the middle ages, the priests, the barons and the people formed distinct groups of society corresponding to some extent to our castes of Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. But these distinctions in western society gradually died out while in India they gained in rigidity and became stronger as time went on.

with his chief and returned to his plough in times of peace. But the expansion of their territories made it essential for the rulers to keep a body of trained and skilled warriors in constant attendance whose services could be requisitioned at any moment. It was on this body of professional men that the brunt of the fighting fell and the practice of employing the militia or the untrained ploughman in the times of war gradually fell into disuse. Thus, this class of warriors gradually formed themselves into a separate class with their own social and other traditions and were styled as the Rajanyas (princely) and Kshatriyas or the powerful. The bulk of the Aryan people who engaged themselves in other pursuits of life like trade and agriculture, came to form a class by themselves commonly known as the Vaishya class while the conquered aborigines were still kept at arm's length and formed the lowest caste (Sudras) in society.

This was, perhaps, the beginning of the caste system. In the earlier stages of its evolution, the institution of caste had not possessed that rigidity which it subsequently acquired. Based as these distinctions were on the profession or occupation, it was not difficult for a man to change from one caste to another. Dronacharya, the celebrated military instructor of the Pandu brothers of Mahabharata was a Brahmin by birth; whereas the great Krishna who expounded the philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita was a Yadava Kshatriya by birth. Regarding the other essentials of the caste system, there is nothing to show that inter-dining and inter-marriages between members of different classes was prohibited, although a free social intercourse of the three upper classes with the Sudras was looked upon with great disfavour.¹ With the passing of time, however, caste distinctions became more rigid and each group began to develop its own social code and organisation, with the result that these groups became strictly hereditary and change from one caste to another became increasingly difficult and almost impossible. Besides the time factor, there were other factors too which made the social groups rigid and inflexible. These were the formation of Sub-castes which came to be associated with birth, adoption of a new calling or craft, place of residence and other similar factors. Later on, the foreigners like the Greeks, the Sakas, and the Huns who had adopted Hinduism were assigned to new castes. Thus the number of castes multiplied in course of time. As the number of castes grew so also did the rigidity of the system develop. The settlement of the Muslims as rulers in this country, also contributed to the rigidity of the system. If they could not oust them from the country, the Hindus endeavoured to main-

¹ On the other hand we come across references in the early Buddhist books which indicate that Brahmins, Vaishyas and Kshatriyas used to send their sons to the same teachers where they ate in the same mess. Even inter-marriages among these three castes used to take place.

tain their religious and social customs intact by taking shelter behind the caste system. Free social intercourse with their Muslim rulers was forbidden by the Brahmin leaders of society.

The system of caste, whatever be its origin, may be said to have exercised a tremendous influence on the life and fortunes of the Hindus for a period of 2,500 years or so. The first signs of distinctions that appear in Rigvedic society are only racial namely the Aryas and the Dasyus, and were introduced to meet the needs of the time when different racial types had to live together in amity and peace. This, therefore, helped to preserve the two different races and cultures namely the Aryan and the Dravidian. The basis for further divisions into Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas was supplied by calling and talent, and thus saved much waste that would otherwise have occurred through want of proper care and discrimination in the choice of occupations. Indeed, the division ensured the preservation of skilled labour and was further calculated to improve efficiency as the knowledge passed from one generation to another. Another advantage that accrued from the caste system was that it fostered a spirit of brotherhood among its members. A member of a caste regarded himself as a member of a great co-operative group and, abiding by the disciplinary rules of the group, he could always look up to it for help and protection. Nor did the limits of a caste coincide with those of a district or a kingdom. It was a much wider organisation; and a Brahmin, Kshatriya or Vaishya of one district or province could always count upon help and support of his brethren of other districts or provinces in the country. Thus, the caste system proved a useful social institution. It has further helped in stabilising the society and preserving all its useful elements. It was this spirit of orthodoxy and exclusiveness which, more than anything else, has defended, saved and preserved the Hindu culture, Hindu ideals and Hindu religion even though the Hindu community has passed through centuries of political turmoils and vicissitudes.

*Influence of
Caste: Its
good and bad
features*

But, if this institution has been of great value to Hinduism, it cannot be denied that many evils also resulted from the system. Castes were needlessly multiplied and the social code of each group was made inflexibly rigid. Admission into the caste or exit from it was rigorously guarded so that it became extremely difficult, in fact, impossible, for a man to change his occupation even if he had no liking for it or was lacking in physical, moral and intellectual equipment necessary for it. Nor was he permitted to adopt a calling outside his group even though he possessed natural aptitude for it. This inelastic attitude of the group had serious consequences in as much as it suppressed genius and the power of initiative in its members. The system

of caste, as one writer has truly observed, "did not make proper provision for low-born talents or high-born incompetents." Again, the caste-barriers, while they contributed to the preservation of social order, did not help the advancement of the nation as a whole. Caste rivalries and feuds began to appear in the course of time and divided the society into mutually jealous groups which would not combine even in the face of common national perils. This division of society into the four castes, each with a well-defined function in the body politic, had also had its repercussions on the political history of the country. The defence of the country was assigned to the military class alone and the rest of the population was unconcerned at the time of a foreign invasion. Never or very seldom indeed, did the masses feel bestirred during the Muhammadan invasions of India. The brunt of fighting was borne by a section of the population alone, namely the Kshatriyas.

Whatever part the institution of caste has played for good or for ill in the past, the great social and political leaders of India have already begun to think about its future.

Future of the caste system The general feeling in the educationally advanced section of Hindu community is that the institution has already outgrown its usefulness and that some of its prohibitive regulations concerning inter-dining and inter-marriage might well be abolished. In fact, the altered conditions of modern social and economic life have already considerably relaxed some of the other features of the caste system. The caste groups are no longer occupational or functional and a person born in a particular group does not stick to the calling of his ancestors but takes up an occupation for which he finds his talent has fitted him or takes to a career into which circumstances have driven him. The institution has lost and is losing its old rigour.

SECTION II. POLITICAL AND INTELLECTUAL ADVANCEMENT

The two great Epic poems are the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Of these, the Ramayana recounts the adventures of Rama, King of Kosala or Oudh, while the Mahabharata gives the tales and legends of nations living between the Jumna and the Ganges.

The great Epics — their authors & dates of composition

The Ramayana is believed to be the work of Valmiki and the composition of the Mahabharata is ascribed to the sage Vyasa. But the epics, as we now have them, unmistakably show considerable additions to the original books and therefore cannot be taken to belong to any one age or any one author. They were frequently touched and retouched by the Brahmins and additions made to them from time to time. Beginning sometime

about 400 B.C., the Mahabharata, according to the scheme propounded by Hopkins, assumed its final form about A.D. 400. The date or the period of composition of the Ramayana is almost equally uncertain. According to Professor Jacobi the first beginnings of the real Epic may go back to 500 B.C., but extensive additions were made till the second century B.C. and even later. However, the second century B.C. saw most of the work complete.

The story of the Ramayana in brief is as follows. Rama, son of Dasaratha, king of Kosala married Sita, the daughter of Janaka, king of Videha. Dasaratha had more than one wife, and the jealousies between them gave rise to the exile of Rama and the series of adventures which are described in the Ramayana. His spouse Sita and his younger step-brother Lakshmana accompanied Rama into the wilderness. For some time they lived in the forests of Dandaka on the banks of the Godavari. Here an incident occurred which eventually led the exiled prince of Kosala to go as far south as Lanka or Ceylon. Surpa Nakha, sister of the king of Ceylon, met the two Kosala princes there and insisted on marrying one of them. She was punished for her obduracy and driven away. She went and complained to her brother Ravana, king of Lanka; and Ravana in his anger took away Sita from her cottage and carried her off to Ceylon.

On their return to the cottage, the brothers were grieved to find Sita missing. At last, when the clue was supplied, Rama and Lakshmana proceeded southwards and made an alliance with Sugriva for the recovery of Sita. Sugriva is described as a powerful native ruler in the Western Ghats. He had been dethroned by his brother Bali; Rama killed Bali and placed Sugriva on the throne, and then Sugriva sent a large army under his general Hanuman to help Rama.

Sugriva's army under the general direction of Rama laid siege to Lanka, the capital of Ceylon. Ravana and his chiefs perished in the conflict. One of Ravana's brothers, Vibhishana, was placed on the throne of Lanka and the party returned to Ayodhya with Sita, the period of Rama's banishment having passed. But there was no happiness in store for Sita, for the people of Ayodhya judged her harshly because she had lived in the house of Ravana. Yielding to the wishes of his people, Rama sent away his wife to the woods, where she lived in the hermitage of Valmiki.

The story of the Mahabharata is as follows. Pandu was the king of the Bharatas whose kingdom lay on both sides of the Jumna. The Bharatas appear to have been the strongest and, perhaps, the largest Hindu nation of those days, for we find the whole of Northern India named after them, Bharata-Varsha. On the death of Pandu, his brother Dhritrashtra, who was blind from his birth, ascended the throne, and brought up the five minor sons of Pandu along with his own hundred sons. All the princes were trained to arms according to the custom of the age, but the Pandava brothers excelled their cousins in all respects. This caused feelings of extreme jealousy in the minds of the sons of Dhritrashtra who began to entertain dark plans to kill their cousins. The conspiracy of Duryodhana, the eldest of the hundred brothers, was luckily discovered in time and the Pandavas escaped. They left Hasti-

napura¹ and for a time wandered about the country in disguise.

In the meantime, news was received that Drupada, the king of the Panchalas—whose kingdom lay south of the kingdom of the Bharatas between the Ganges and the Jumna—was arranging for the marriage of his daughter. Many princes and warriors had assembled at Kampila to win her hand and the five sons of Pandu had also gone to the assembly in disguise. A great feat in archery was to be performed to win the princess Draupadi. Many princes tried their skill and failed till at last the disguised Arjuna, the third of the Pandava brothers performed it and won the hand of the bride. Thus, the Pandavas, strengthened by the alliance with the king of the Panchalas, now came forward and claimed a portion of the ancient kingdom of the Bharatas. The kingdom was accordingly divided: Duryodhana, son of Dhritrashtra, retained Hastinapura and the portion on the Ganges; and the sons of Pandu took the western half watered by the Jumna and founded the city of Indraprastha near modern Delhi.

But the Pandavas were not destined to live in peace. The Hindus of that age freely indulged in the vice of playing dice and gambling and the wily Duryodhana once invited his cousin, Yudhishtira, to a game of dice and won from him, unfairly, everything he had: his wealth, his kingdom and even the princess Draupadi. In the end, Yudhishtira with his brothers and Draupadi was compelled to go and live in exile for thirteen years.

For twelve years, Yudhishtira and his brothers dwelt in a great forest on the banks of the Saraswati and during the thirteenth year they remained in concealment at the court of the king Virat. Virat, the king of the Matsyas ruled over a kingdom that lay between the Jumna and the Chambal corresponding roughly to the modern Gwalior in Central India. At this time, the Kauravas—for that was the name by which the sons of Dhritrashtra were called—invaded the kingdom of Virat, but they were put to flight with the help of the Pandavas. The period of exile being over, they issued from their concealment and demanded back their kingdom. Duryodhana refused the demand and the result was the great war which is the principal subject of the epic.

The Pandavas had their principal allies in Lord Krishna, the ruler of the Yadavas (Gujarat Kathiawar), the Panchalas and the Matsyas, whereas the Kauravas were helped by the kings of the Kosalas, the Videhas and the Kalingas from the east and by the Gandharas and the Sindhus from the west. A great battle raged for eighteen days in which the Pandavas triumphed. A very large number of men were slain during the war including all the sons of Dhritrashtra, and the Pandavas themselves having become weary of life, placed a grandson of Arjuna on the throne of Hastinapura and wandered away into the forests of the Himalayas eventually ascending to heaven one after another.

Authorities differ widely as to how far the narrative of the two poems may be taken as historical fact. In both cases, fact and fiction or allegory are, without doubt, closely interwoven. For the purposes of this history it is enough to state that the old *gathas* of the Kshatriya bards containing the story of Rama's adventures in the forests of the

¹ Hastinapura was the capital of the kingdom of Pandu. The ruins of the place lie some sixty miles to the north-east of Delhi.

Deccan and Southern India, the great fight for the recovery of his devoted wife, Sita, from the toils of the king of Lanka, and the tradition of a great war (Mahabharata) in which all Aryavarta was engaged, cannot be regarded as pure myth or allegory. The Ramayana, in its broad outline, discloses the history of the Aryan penetration into Southern India. Similarly, the narrative portion of the Mahabharata tells us how some trivial dynastic quarrel brought to a head the long-standing contentions of the Indo-Aryan tribes. Whether the actual battle fought on the field of Kurukshetra which the Mahabharata describes had taken place in Vedic times or later, it is difficult to say.

Even if the great Epics, as some of the present day scholars suggest, have little or no historical basis there is no denying the fact that they have exercised considerable influence on the daily life of a Hindu. For centuries, the stories narrated in these Epics have been believed as wholly and literally true by the whole of Hindu society; and Rama and Sita have supplied to successive generations of Hindu men and women their ideals of life. Rama is still regarded as an ideal son, an ideal king; Sita is still a model for Indian womanhood both in purity and fidelity, while Lakshmana is still looked up as an ideal brother. Similarly, Yudhishtira is regarded as an embodiment of truthfulness and Lord Krishna as an incarnation of god Vishnu. "For centuries," as Rangaswami Aiyangar observes, "Indians have turned in sorrow, in joy, and in daily toil to these noble poems for solace and inspiration. In this sense they have become national possessions, keeping alive, through ages of disunion, strife and misery, the idea of a common origin and of common traditions."

Since facts and fiction are so closely interwoven in the Epic tales, it is not possible to extract much material which would enable us to construct anything deserving the name of accurate and precise political history. But all the same, these two celebrated Epics supply a valuable mass of material for writing a cultural and social history of the Hindus of the Epic age. For this purpose, if for no other purpose, this Epic literature is of great value to a student of ancient history of India. Even though there is a difference of locale in the historical and geographical setting of the two Epics, the chronological approximation (Ramayana 500—100 B.C. and Mahabharata 400 B.C. to A.D. 400) make the social and political atmosphere of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata much the same.

Of the various interesting and instructive episodes given in the Mahabharata, the most famous is the Bhagavad Gita or the 'Song Celestial.' It is a beautiful poem believed to have been recited by Krishna

*Influence of
the Epics*

*Historical
Importance of
the Epics*

*The Bhagavad
Gita*

to Arjuna on the eve of the battle, to persuade him to do his duty as a Kshatriya when he showed a reluctance to fight against his friends and kinsmen. Krishna tells him that he is God in the form of man and Arjuna, therefore, must have complete faith in him. He, then, proceeds to expound his philosophy and urges the Pandava prince to take up his bow and fight as it does behove a Kshatriya, and to trust God for the rest.

The Bhagavad Gita has, for hundreds of generations, exercised a very profound influence on the Hindu mind and is read and revered by millions of Hindus even to this day. There is hardly a living language of the world in which the Gita has not been translated.

The geographical allusions contained in the later literature show that the Aryans had advanced from the Panjab towards the east and the south. It is Madhyadesha, or the middle country, of which this literature constantly speaks and the places of great sanctity mentioned in these books are cities like Kasi (Benares), Prayag (Allahabad), Kampila and Hardwar. The conditions of life also appear more settled than in the period of the Rigveda.

In place of tribal chiefships, we have large kingdoms ruled by strong and powerful monarchs. Many of the famous tribes of the Rigvedic age had passed into oblivion, and new ones had taken their place. Thus the Bharatas, the Purus, and the Tritsus are superseded by the Kurus, the Panchalas and the Kasis whose names do not occur in the Rigvedic hymns but who now began to play an important part in the political life of the country.

Some of the more important kingdoms of this period were the Kingdoms of the Kurus, the Panchalas, the Kosalas, the Videhas, and the Kasis. The Kurus founded a kingdom corresponding to modern Thaneswar, Delhi and the upper Doabs with its capital at Hastinapura. The Panchalas were a nation, probably, made up of *Panch* or five tribes. They occupied the land to the north of the Kurus, corresponding to the districts of Farrukabad and part of Rohilkhand with their capital at Kampila. The Kosalas founded their kingdom farther east on the north of the Ganges in the country now called Oudh. The great national hero Rama belonged to the ruling dynasty of the Kosalas. To the east of the Kosala kingdom was the kingdom of the Videhas in the country now known as Bihar. The river Gandak, probably, separated the two neighbouring kingdoms. Below the confluence of the Jumna and the Ganges near modern Benares, the Kasis established their power. Further east, *i.e.* beyond Bihar, lived the Magadhas and the Angas.

who were yet outside the pale of Aryan civilization. In two passages of the Aitareya Brahmana, we come across the mention of Vidarbha or Berar. Thus, nearly the whole of Northern India from the Himalayas to the Vindhya, and perhaps even beyond, had now come within the ken of the Aryans. A few other tribes like the Matsyas, the Surasenas, and the Gandharas are also mentioned as having governments of their own. The Satpatha Brahmana contains frequent allusions to the aggressive and ambitious wars waged between the neighbouring Aryan rulers as also between the Aryans and the non-Aryan States and this explains the consequent rise and fall of these States. But it is difficult and hazardous to construct a narrative of political history of the period with only scanty references. It can be safely said, however, that the centre of Aryan power and civilization during the later Vedic and the Epic periods had moved from the Panjab to the country called the Madhyadesha or Aryavarta, now known as the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh.

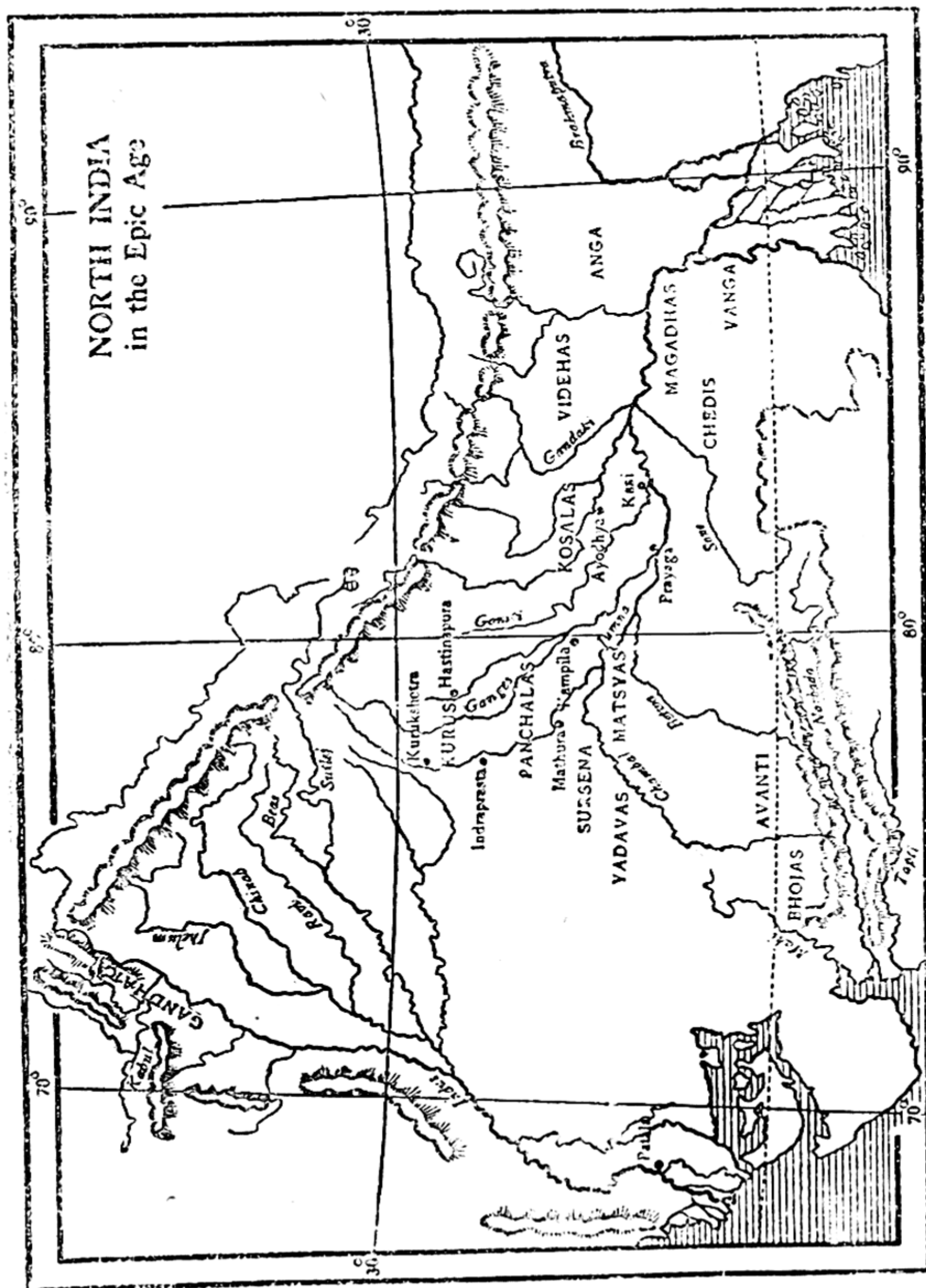
One important feature of the later Vedic and the Epic age, as we have said above, is the formation of larger territorial units in place of small tribal settlements. Naturally, therefore, as the authority of the rulers extended, their powers and prerogatives also increased. The Samitis and Sabhas composed of the chief men of the clan who had an effective voice in the administration of the tribal governments lost their importance in proportion to the rise of the absolute authority of the king. The king's will is often referred to in the Epics as supreme and his rights are said to be divine. He is sometimes described as God in human form. The government of the country is regarded as the concern not of the people but of the kings and the nobility. Ashvamedha and Rajasuya sacrifices symbolising the degree of power and prestige attained by kings are sometimes mentioned in the Brahmanas and the Epics. These may be taken to indicate the fact that occasionally a more powerful king did arise and conquered his neighbours, and performed the horse sacrifice and adopted the title of *Samrat* (Emperor). There is no evidence, otherwise, in the Epics to show that an empire or even a very extensive kingdom was set up by a ruler who may have had the pretension of a modern emperor.

(c) Powers & Prerogatives of kings

Another important feature in the political life of the people that comes to view during this period is the beginning of the local administration, an institution which became so conspicuous in later times. Each village or *grama* had a head-man over it and every ten villages formed one bigger unit with a senior officer and so on till the biggest administrative unit comprised one thousand villages. Thus a regular hierarchy of local officials

(d) Elaborate administrative machinery

was formed and the entire department was placed in charge of one of the ministers of the king. The village then, as now, formed an important unit of revenue administration; one-sixth



of the produce from land being charged as the share of the king. Amongst other taxes charged by the State, the more important were those on salt, mines, and ferries.

The political and social conditions of this period are vividly

illustrated in the two famous Epics of India, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. A study of these books gives an impression that the Hindus of the Epic Age lived a life of great simplicity, integrity, and honesty. They seldom missed their morning bath and prayer. Their food and dress were equally simple. The use of liquor and flesh as part of their diet, of which one finds frequent mention in the Vedic period, was falling into disuse and was greatly decried in this age,¹ even though some of the other social vices like dicing and gambling seem to have continued at least amongst the upper classes of society. Amongst the fruits, the mango is mentioned for the first time in the Epic literature. The dress of a Hindu in the Epic Age comprised two or three pieces of garments, namely a long piece of cloth for the upper part of the body and another long piece for the lower part, together with a turban for the head. Trousers, coats and shirts were, probably, unknown, and in all probability, the art of cutting and sewing had not come into vogue. Even as late as the middle of the seventh century A.D., the dress of an Indian, both prince and peasant, continued to be two or three loose pieces of cloth, as is evidenced from the descriptions given by Hiuen Tsang and by Bana in the Harshacharita. The institution of tailoring was, probably, introduced by the Turks for the first time.

Social Conditions

Men of the upper and middle classes married more than one wife. The Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas could marry women of lower castes but Sudras were enjoined to marry in their own caste. Child marriage was unknown in the Epic Age. Women were married when they were grown up and not unoften, chose their own husbands. There was no purdah system as it is known to-day. The girls of the higher classes were educated and had regular training in singing and dancing.

In the Epic period we hear of *Parishads* and other seats of learning where learned men received pupils for education. A child at an early age was placed under the charge of a teacher with whom he lived for many years under strict discipline. Princes of the royal house and other Kshatriya students were early trained in arms as in arts, and were made familiar with the bow and arrow, the sword and the javelin.

Progress of Science and Learning

The study of the Vedas was considered the most important duty while that of the remaining sciences was regarded as merely supplementary. Indeed, it was with a view to the correct performance of religious rites that astronomy, geometry and arithmetic were discovered in India, and it was mostly in the epic period, when a greater importance was attached to these

¹ Perhaps the doctrine of Ahimsa, which was so forcefully developed by Mahavira and Buddha, began to germinate during this period.

rites, that the foundations of these sciences were laid. To fix the right time for the *Yajna* gave the first impulse to astronomical observations; urged by this want the priest watched night after night, the advance of the moon through the circle of the *Nakshatras* or the constellations and day after day the progress of the sun towards the north and the south. The Hindu months are named after these constellations along the path of the moon. The construction of the sacrificial altar, similarly, gave the first impulse to geometry which led the Brahmin priests "to discover rules for constructing squares equal to oblongs and oblongs equal to squares, as also rules for making triangles equal to given squares and oblongs, and circles equal to squares." And in arithmetic the Hindus invented the decimal notation, which has now been adopted by all civilised nations.

Again, it was for the correct pronunciation of the Vedic mantras that the Hindus developed the science of Phonetics and Metre. The beginnings of the study of metre (*chhanda*) were made in the Vedic period but a thorough scientific treatment of the subject is first noticed in the Sutra literature.

Another important branch of knowledge which was developed in this period is the *Vyakarna* (Grammar). The Hindus and the Greeks, according to Professor Max Muller, are the only nations which have developed the science of grammar, and Panini, perhaps, is the greatest grammarian that the world has ever seen.

The chief characteristic of the literature of the later Vedic period is its conciseness and brevity. The technical name *Sutra* which is applied to this literature means aphorisms or short sayings. A sutra is so perfect that not a word, not even a letter is used that is not wanted. The maker or author of a sutra, it is said, rejoiced as much at the saving of a short vowel as at the birth of a son.

*The Sutra
Literature*

500—200 B. C.

The chief reasons which led to this extreme conciseness were probably the convenience to young Aryan students who learned them in early years by rote. Literature, indeed, was growing in bulk and the art of writing was not much in vogue in those ancient times. All learning was handed down by word of mouth, from father to son, or from teacher to disciple. Hence arose the need of condensing or summing up important literary works in short prose lines which could be committed to memory with ease and convenience. We also know that the Aryans were spreading over the whole of India and were imposing on other nations their own customs and rites; it became necessary for them, therefore, to compile condensed manuals of such rites or laws.

The different branches of learning which assumed the Sutra form were :—

(a) The details of ceremonials relating to the Vedic Yajnas as given in the Samhitas, the Brahmanas, and the Aranyakas. These manuals were called the Shrauta Sutras from the Shruti literature with which they dealt.

(b) The Grihya Sutras relate to rules of domestic rites and appropriate season festivals, etc. These embody rules as laid down by Brahmin teachers for the right conduct and guidance of a householder's life. They tell us of some forty different rites to be performed at different times in a man's life from conception to cremation.

(c) The Dharma Sutras treat of the customs, manners and laws of the everyday life of the Aryans of this age and are the earliest works on Indian law. In fact, the entire code of Manu,¹ the greatest of the Hindu law-givers, is based on the Dharma Sutras. It is in the Dharma Sutras that the rights and duties of kings are set forth and the laws for the administration of civil and criminal justice are embodied. The regulations governing the Ashramdharma or the four stages of an Aryan's life are also discussed in these manuals at some length.

The Shrauta Sutras present to us the Hindus as worshippers and the remaining two groups show them as citizens and householders. These were taught to a young Hindu boy before he left his school so that he might remember ever after, his duties towards himself, his relations and his neighbours. No nation on earth, perhaps, devised a more efficacious method of impressing on every individual member of society his duties in life.

NOTES

The period known as the later Vedic and Epic Age is, in a way, the most important period in the cultural history of ancient India. It witnessed the development and clarification of the theological beliefs of the Aryans, as well as the formation of the basic principles of Hinduism like the beliefs in eternity and oneness of God, the doctrines of Karma, Punarjanma and Moksha. This was done by the greatest intellects of the day who examined and discussed these subtle problems, in all their bearings, in a body of books known as the Six Schools of Philosophy and the Upanishadas. Again, it was in this period, that the social institutions peculiar to the Hindus namely the fourfold division of a

¹ The Code of Manu is a great literary monument. It is composed in 2,700 verses of simple classical style and covers a variety of subjects such as the civil and criminal laws, laws of inheritance, social and domestic duties of a householder as also his moral and spiritual duties. The work which exists now is believed to have been compiled about the beginning of the Christian era but it was based on much older material. Manu was either the ancestor of a family or the founder of a School of Thought named after him, the Manava School. It represents the spirit and character of Hinduism of the age when the original code was composed. The composition of the code was, probably, undertaken to combat the influence of Buddhism which was gradually making itself felt on orthodox Vedic rites.

man's life and the fourfold division of the entire population (caste system) were developed.

The two Epic poems which faithfully and vividly depict the contemporary Hindu society were composed in this or in the period immediately following the Epic Age. The method of condensing or summing up big literary works in short prose lines (Sutras) which could be committed to memory with ease and convenience, was also devised in this age. And it was in the form of these short aphorisms that important works on grammar, laws, customs, and the rules of civic life were reduced. These were taught to a young Hindu boy before he left his school so that he might remember ever after his duties as a citizen. No nation on earth, perhaps, devised a more efficacious method of impressing on every individual member of society, his duties in life.

The centre of political power of the Aryans, during this period, had moved eastwards from the Panjab to the Middle country now known as the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. It was in this region that the kingdoms of the Epic Age like those of the Kurus, the Panchalas, the Kasis, the Kosalas and the Videhas were formed.

These kingdoms were very much larger than the kingdoms of the tribal chiefs of the Rigvedic age. With the increase in the size of their kingdoms, the powers and the prerogatives of their rulers also increased. They now came to be regarded as representatives of God in human form. Instead of voluntary offerings made to their ruler by his people in the early Vedic age, regular taxes were now levied by a king. The machinery for administration was also made more elaborate. An imperceptible change in the social life of the people was also coming about (See under Government and Social conditions in the text).

QUESTIONS

1. Mention some of the important religious doctrines developed by the Aryans of the later Vedic and Epic Age.
2. Examine some of the important changes introduced in the structure of society and the social life of the people during the Epic Age.
3. What is the central thought that runs in the exposition of their doctrines by the founders of the Systems of Hindu Philosophy?
4. Make a general survey of political and social conditions prevailing in India in the Epic age. In what way did these differ from those obtaining in society in the Rigvedic times?
5. Discuss the value of the Epics as a source of history.
6. Trace the development of early Indian polity from Rigvedic times to the end of the Epic period.
7. How did the Caste System come into being? Discuss the merits and demerits of the system.

CHAPTER IV

Buddhism and Jainism

The sixth century B.C. witnessed the birth of a large number of religious sects in India.¹ The reasons for their rise and growth are to be sought in the general spiritual and moral unrest that prevailed in society. Men's minds, as we have already observed, were deeply stirred by the problems of life and death. The problem of problems before a man was to find out the way by which his soul could be freed from the bonds of the unending mundane existence. Different means had been suggested to attain this end. The priestly classes emphasised the efficacy of the hymns (Mantras) and the divine power of sacrifices (Yajnas). They directed their whole energy in this direction and urged the performance of a number of ceremonies and sacraments (Samskara) for a person who wished to obtain eventually the cherished deliverance for his soul. To these sacraments much mystic significance was attached. This was known as Karma Marga.

*Conditions
favouring the
rise of new
religious sects*

The Karma Marga, however, was not considered as the only means of attaining happiness here and bliss hereafter. Shortly there developed the idea of Tapas or self-mortification as leading to the same or perhaps even more important results. The idea underlying the practice of penance was to enable a man to subdue his physical senses and develop, in himself, the faculty of concentrating upon the realizing of the Supreme Spirit. The result was that those who could do so withdrew from the world, and in the seclusion of forests and hills practised austerities. Contemporary literature seems to show that the practice of retirement from the world was growing popular and the life of a monk came to be much sought after.

While the Karma and the Tapas Marga were becoming popular with the average man, the intellectual section of the people was more and more urged on by the conviction that bliss and salvation were attainable only by the true knowledge or Jnana Marga. They laid greater emphasis on the doctrine that "he who knows God, attains to God, nay, he is God." They dis-

¹ It may be of some interest to know that it was not only India which was seething with religious discontent at this time but some other parts of the world, too, were experiencing this sort of discontent. In the Greek islands of Ionia, Heraclitus preached his new doctrines; in Persia, Zoraster launched his protest against the prevailing religious superstitions; and the Chinese people welcomed the philosophic teachings of Confucius.

carded or gave a definitely subordinate position to the Karma and the Tapas Margas. It was this exposition of the Jnana doctrine that had led to the establishment of the famous Six Schools of Philosophy.

These conflicting views, regarding the means of attaining Moksa, had created unrest and confusion in the moral and spiritual world and the people did not know exactly what to accept or what to reject. Besides this intellectual confusion, there was the growing monopoly of the unscrupulous and exacting priesthood that was responsible for creating a reaction against the established order of things. The rites and ceremonies had become so elaborate and expensive that they were no longer within the reach of the average man. The actual killing and sacrificing of living animals on certain ceremonial occasions created a feeling of revolt and hatred against such things in the minds of many. Again, the current usage which forbade the non-Brahmin castes from taking to the ascetic life or following the Tapas Marga added to the resentment of the people against the prevailing Brahminism. A number of leading teachers and scholars voiced the spirit of the time, and founded religious sects, each of which strove to provide spiritual repast for all and sundry and find a simple and practicable way to obtain deliverance for the soul from its unending pilgrimage. Of these sects or movements that were founded during the sixth century two, namely, Buddhism and Jainism alone survived, the rest having disappeared in the course of time.¹

Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, was born at Kapilvastu² in or about 563 B.C. and was the only son of Raja Suddhodana, the ruler of the Sakya clan. The territory of this clan lay along the foot of the Himalayas now called Nepal Terai. He was married to princess Yasodhara, the daughter of a neighbouring king, at the age of 18. After several years of married life, a son was born to prince Siddhartha and Yasodhara who was named Rahula. The prince had, thus, everything necessary to make up the joy of life but he was not happy at heart. In fact, he was not meant for this sort of life. The

¹ The Pali works mention that when the Buddha began his ministry, there existed no less than sixty-two different Sects; according to the Jain texts, their number was more than three hundred.

² A mass of legends has gathered round the life of Buddha so much so that it has become exceedingly difficult for a biographer to disentangle facts from fiction. The prevailing legends say that Siddhartha's mother Maya Devi was journeying from her father's house to Kapilvastu and when she reached the village of Lumbuni, she was suddenly seized with the pains of childbirth and there the child was born under the shade of a Sala tree. It is further stated that immediately after his birth, the infant took seven steps and recited seven verses. These and other stories about Buddha's birth are all illustrated in beautiful sculptures and paintings in the old Buddhist buildings.

Buddhist tradition tells us that from his very childhood, prince Siddhartha was gentle in speech, kind of heart and full of mercy to all; and those virtues developed as he grew in years. Eventually, he felt that by giving to the Sakyas an heir to carry on the succession of the ruling line, he had fulfilled his chief duty as a householder and that he could claim the right and privilege of following the traditional Aryan way of becoming a Sanyasin to seek the path leading to Moksa. Accordingly, he left his home and kingdom (*circ.* 533 B.C.) as a wandering ascetic in search of truth. This, in the Buddhist language, is called the Great Renunciation.

After leaving his father's home, prince Siddhartha went to a forest near Rajgriha, and lived with two pious Brahmin hermits as their disciple. He stayed with them for two years and learnt all that these good men could teach him, but the great and real peace which he sought did not come. Then he left the Brahmin seminary and decided to have recourse to penance. He went far away into the forests of Gaya and for more than four years performed the severest possible austerities; for he shared the prevailing belief that a man's body was the worst foe he had and that to purify his soul he must starve and torture his body. By continual fasting during these years he wasted away his body; but, at the end he found he was no nearer the road to bliss than when he began. He gave up penances and came to the conclusion that there was no one who could show him the way and that he must find it out for himself. It was in this distressed state of mind that Siddhartha, one day, sat under an umbrageous Pipal tree and began to contemplate. The legend runs that he did not stir from his place for forty-nine days and remained lost in deep thought during all this time. On the 49th day, the revelation came to him that the Great Peace was within his own heart and he must seek it there. This is known as the Great Enlightenment and since then prince Siddhartha has been called the Buddha or the Enlightened One.

After the dawn of the new wisdom, Gautama Buddha began to formulate his thoughts and preach his new doctrines to men and women. He first went to Sarnath and delivered his first sermon which, in the Buddhist language, is called Dharma Chakra *The teachings of Buddha* Parvartan or the "Turning of the Wheel of Righteousness."¹ It is the first sermon that contains the kernel of his doctrines. He impressed upon his audience the four certainties: there is suffering in life; that this suffering has a cause; that this suffering could be removed by

¹Gautama's birth at Lumbini gardens; his enlightenment at Buddha-Gaya; his first sermon at Sarnath; and his death at Kusinagar are regarded as four great events in Buddha's life and the places associated with these, as the holiest places of pilgrimage.

removing its cause. The cause of the suffering, he said, was Desire or Trishna and that it was this desire for existence that was responsible for the births and re-births of man. When the selfish impulse of desire has ceased to act in man, he urged, it was only then possible for the individual soul to obtain freedom or Nirvana from this unending cycle of births and deaths. How to remove Desire was, therefore, the real problem before men. Self-torture, the Great Buddha argued, could not overcome Trishna or bring about an escape from re-birth and its attendant suffering. The lighting of the sacrificial fire or the chanting of the Vedic hymns would not suffice to cleanse the mind from gross desires. The Desire, he said, could only be removed if a person has righteous beliefs; righteous thoughts; righteous speech; and righteous actions; a righteous mode of living; and righteous endeavour; righteous recollection and meditation. This was the right path (the Eightfold Path) that would ultimately bring final bliss to the individual soul according to the teachings of Buddha, and was described as the Middle Path because it lay between gross sensualism and strict asceticism. In a word, what Buddha actually taught men was *how to live a moral and righteous life*.

Another point on which Buddha laid great emphasis was the law of Karma and its working. The state of a man in this life and the next, he urged, depends upon his own acts. No sacrifice to the gods can wash away sin, no prayer of any priest, no prayer of any man can do himself or any other man any good. What a man sows that he reaps. Even God or gods, he said, must reap the fruit of their actions. This is the Law or Dharma that works in the universe and this all must obey whether they are men or gods. This Law, according to Buddhist beliefs, never changes. A man or god, therefore, is what he makes himself. If he sins no more he dies no more, and when he dies no more he is born no more, and thus comes to live the life of Final Bliss.

In his religious teaching, Gautama Buddha may be called an agnostic, as he neither accepts nor rejects the existence of God. He always avoided discussions about God or the nature of the soul. When he was questioned about these, he said, he knew nothing about them except that the God or gods too were under Dharma or the eternal Law of Causation. Similarly, he ignored the authority of the Vedas; and neither preached nor encouraged the popular beliefs.

Gautama Buddha himself lived a calm and holy life and by his example and precept influenced the lives of thousands of people before he passed away at the ripe age of eighty. The moral code which he left behind for the guidance of his followers continued to exercise that wholesome influence for centuries and appealed so fervently to the nations of Asia, north and south, east and west,

that to the present day nearly one-third of the human race revere his memory and follow his teachings. Charity, truthfulness, forgiveness, love and benevolence, kindness and mercy to all living beings are some of the most prominent features of his teachings. From amongst his famous commandments the following five are well-known :

1. Thou shalt not kill any living being.
2. Thou shalt not take what is not given to thee.
3. Thou shalt not speak falsely.
4. Thou shalt not drink intoxicating drink.
5. Thou shalt not live an unchaste life.

The Buddhist doctrine that Desire is the root cause of human misery and that it leads to re-birth and also that cessation of desire alone leads to deliverance from re-birth and suffering is, in fact, an adaptation of the old Hindu idea which is found both in the Rigveda and the Upanishadas. The Rigveda, the fountain-head of Hindu knowledge and wisdom, had taught that the impulse through which the manifold life of the world came into being was Kama or Desire. It was this Desire, again, according to the teachings of the Upanishadas, that leads the soul on to re-birth after death. And further still, the authors of the Upanishadas hold that final salvation could be achieved by righteousness and divine knowledge. Thus, there is a close similarity in the explanation offered by Buddhism and Hinduism regarding the cause of birth and re-birth; and the final goal of life according to both is Salvation. Again, Buddha's Dharma is not very different from the Hindu Law of Karma, either. It is only a more elaborate exposition of the same. Even the Buddhist philosophy, which is agnostic in its main tenets, is akin to the Hindu Sankhya philosophy and Gautama Buddha, like his great predecessor Kapila, finds no room for God in his scheme of the universe and its working. Gautama Buddha's teachings, in fact, were largely based on Brahmin ideas of Punarjanma, Karma, and Moksa. Even during his life he counted many worthy Brahmins among his disciples. He forebore to attack Brahminism, and did not encourage any conflict with it. Buddha did not protest against the institution of caste as such. His attack was limited to the fact that he would not allow the Brahmin's claim to superiority merely by his right of birth, but otherwise he upheld existing social obligations.¹

The material difference between the Buddha's creed and that of a Brahmin lies in regard to their respective views about God, the Vedas and the Vedic rites. Buddha ignored the authority of the Vedas and had no faith in the efficacy of the Yajnas and

¹ "A man does not become a Brahmin by his plaited hair, by his family or by birth. In whom there is truth and righteousness, he is blessed, he is a Brahmin," said Buddha.

other rites and sacraments enjoined by them; whereas a Brahmin looked upon the Vedas as something divine and had a deep rooted faith in the value of sacrifices. Although a Brahmin had a strong belief in the existence of God and regarded Him as the Creator of the universe, yet the agnostic attitude taken up by the Buddha was not the first departure from strict Brahmin theology. Kapila and Kanada, before him, had taken up similar position.¹

With such a close resemblance between some of the fundamental principles of their creed, it is not improbable that Buddhism would have developed into one sect of Brahminism and remained as such, had it not been for the fact that the Buddha's disbelief in the value and efficacy of sacrifices and the divine authority of the Vedas kept it outside the Brahminic fold. The other important factor which gave the Buddha's sect an individuality of its own was the order of monks and nuns instituted by him. Considering all these facts, therefore, we feel inclined to believe that Gautama Buddha cannot be justly regarded as heading a revolt against the Brahmin religion and social order. On the contrary, Buddhism and Brahminism continued to exist side by side for many generations till a grave political accident in the third century B.C., forced the Buddhist doctrines into a position of eminence.

Recognising that the high and puritanic ideals which he had placed before his followers were not attainable under ordinary conditions of life, Gautama Buddha founded an Order of ascetics bound by strict rules of conduct and discipline. To this Order was given the name of Sangha or Community. The membership of the Order was thrown open to all who were above the age of eighteen and were free from leprosy, consumption and other infectious diseases. Those who were in the service of the king or an individual, those who were in debt, and those who had been branded as robbers or criminals were refused admission into the Order. The Sangha, thus, formed a community of persons who were physically and morally fit to perform the noble service required of them.

The ceremony of initiation into the Order was simple and plain, and the language of the brotherhood was the common speech of the people. A novitiate, whether a man or a woman, when admitted into the Order had to have his or her head shaved, put on a yellow robe and take oaths of fidelity to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. He or she was further required to observe the internal discipline of the Order and abide by its rules for leading an austere, simple, and celibate life.²

¹ See pages 30-31 *ante*. For a comparison of Buddhism and Jainism and Hinduism see also pages 58, and 61-62.

² Life in a Buddhist monastery was, indeed, a hard and puritanic life. The members of the Order were forbidden the use of garlands, scents, and other

With a view to maintain a rigid observance of disciplinary rules, it was the practice in every monastic house (Vihara) to hold a fortnightly meeting of its members, where the rules were read out by the senior member and the breaches thereof, if any, were confessed by those present, and those confessing their guilt were made to undergo penitence, penance or punishment as the case might be. Such was the great Order of Monks and Nuns founded by Gautama Buddha and was, probably, the first Order of its kind known in the world.¹

After his Enlightenment, the rest of the Buddha's long life was devoted to the active preaching of his doctrines. His activities extended to the kingdoms of Kosala and Magadha, and as tradition affirms he received, wherever he went, a warm reception from people of all ranks. The ruling chiefs were ready to listen to him as he was one of their own class; and as he so boldly questioned the monopoly of the Brahmins in matters spiritual. The common people were attracted by the simplicity and nobility of his teachings no less than by the fact that the great spiritual truths were made available to them in popular language and free of those extortionate fees which the Brahmins used to demand for similar services. Large number of these men, therefore, flocked together under his spiritual banner. The Buddha led a life of strict virtue and was gifted with sweet, fluent and persuasive speech. Many a time, he won over his Brahmin opponents in open debate and we find that not a few of the Buddha's converts were Brahmins, like Maha Kashyapa, Sariputta, Moggollana and others who recognized the futility of animal sacrifices in the orthodox system and also appreciated Gautama's interpretation of the Law of Karma.

*Spread of
Buddhism*

The Sangha itself proved an effective instrument of propaganda for the new faith. The Bhikshus were a devoted band of the Master's followers. They were detached from all worldly pursuits and had nothing more dear to their hearts than the welfare of their church. They were all intelligent and able-bodied men possessing considerable moral and spiritual stamina and each of them had injunctions from the Master 'to be always on the move.' "Go ye Bhikshus and wander," said the Buddha

articles of personal decoration. They were not to indulge in liquor, flesh-food, dancing, singing, or music; they were required to sleep on a hard and narrow bed and to beg their food from door to door.

¹Those of the Buddha's followers who actually joined the Order were called Bhikshus and Bhikshunis while the rest were known as Upasakas or lay disciples. It seems that Gautama Buddha was not in favour of ordaining women as Nuns but he did so reluctantly at the repeated requests of his chief disciple Ananda.

A noteworthy point in the organization of the Buddhist Church is that the Sanghas were only small local organizations. There was no central Sangha to co-ordinate their work; and a member of one Sangha was automatically a member of another Sangha.

“for the gain of the many, for the welfare of the many, out of compassion for the world; for the good, for the gain, for the welfare of gods and men. Let not two of you go the same way.” The Buddhist missionaries were, thus, made to carry the message of salvation from door to door and deliver it free to rich and poor alike. Even when the Bhikshus went into retreat or the Vasa in a monastery, during the rainy season, they did not sit idle. This period of retreat was utilized in giving moral and spiritual discourses to the inquisitive common folk who collected around the Vihara. A Buddhist Vihara, in fact, became a seminary which provided all the laymen of the town with a free education in moral and spiritual truths calculated to bring happiness and contentment to the human soul. We must also remember that a Buddhist Bhikshu had a distinct advantage over the Brahmin teacher in as much as the former discoursed of common ethics which were within the comprehension of an average man, whereas the latter would unfold subtle philosophical problems and draw upon his Shastras in the learned Sanskrit language which was not intelligible to the man in the street.

The first Buddhist Council was held in 483 B.C. a little time after the death of the Great Master when about five hundred of his disciples met together near Pataliputra to collect and arrange the teachings and sayings of their Teacher. They used to meet from day to day and chant them together so as to fix them in their minds. They made three great divisions of them and gave them the name of Pitakas or Baskets. The first Basket contained the actual sayings and doings of the Buddha, the second the rules that he had laid down for the guidance of monks and nuns, and the third the philosophic doctrines. A few centuries later, about 90 B.C., these were reduced to writing in Ceylon, in the Pali language in which we have them now.

Besides the task of arranging the Master's sayings and teachings, the First Council had also made certain rules for the Sangha. But in course of time differences had arisen among the monks in the rigid observance of some of these rules, particularly as to whether they should or should not accept gold or silver from the people when offered. A second Council, therefore, was called in or about 383 B.C. at Vaisali (Bihar) where some seven hundred of these monks had assembled. No agreement was, however, arrived at and the Council ended in almost a permanent division of the Church into what is known as the Northern and the Southern Churches. The subsequent Councils held in the times of Asoka and Kanishka will be described later in these pages.

According to the Jain belief which has also, now, been accepted by historians, Jainism existed long before Gautama Buddha was

*The Buddhist
Councils and
Literature*

born. It was a long line of prophets or *tirthankaras* who preached the Jain doctrines and that the last of the line of spiritual pontiffs was Parsavanath who lived 250 years before Vardhamana Mahavira. Parsavanath was the son of King Asvasena of Benares, but he abandoned the royal state in favour of a life spiritual. His main teachings were: non-injury, non-lying (not to tell lies), non-stealing, non-possession. Vardhamana Mahavira's father and other members of his family were followers of Parsavanath's religion, and naturally Mahavira too, was influenced by the Jain doctrines in his youth. Later on, however, he introduced several important changes in the creed and also organised the church on more definite lines so much so that he came to be regarded as the founder of Jainism.

*Antiquity of
Jainism*

Vardhamana Mahavira, was a contemporary of Gautama Buddha. He was the son of Sidharatha, a Kshatriya nobleman of Vaisali, the capital of the kingdom of Videha, and was on his mother's side connected with the ruling Lichhavi family of Vaisali. The story of Mahavira's early life tells us that the princess Trishala (like the Buddha's mother Maya Devi) had auspicious dreams about the child in the womb, and the astrologers foretold that the child would become either a universal monarch or a prophet. During his boyhood, Vardhamana Mahavira 'was educated to the highest perfection in all branches of knowledge and art.' In due time he was married to a lady named Yasoda, by whom he had a daughter, whose husband Jamali became the first disciple of his father-in-law and subsequently the propagator of the first schism in the Jain Church. In his thirtieth year, Mahavira left his home after the demise of his parents and became a homeless monk in the search of truth. He joined the Order of Parsavanath but soon gave it up.

*Vardhamana
Mahavira*
599—527 B.C.

Vardhamana then resorted alone to the forests of Bihar where he was so absorbed in deep meditation that for the first thirteen months 'he never changed his robes, but let all sorts of living things crawl on his body.' On the expiry of that period, he is said to have discarded every kind of garment and went about as a naked ascetic. For the succeeding twelve years Vardhamana led a life of the hardest asceticism, thus preparing himself for the attainment of the highest spiritual knowledge. The years spent in self-penance and meditation did not prove fruitless, as about the end of this period one day the light flashed upon him and Vardhamana attained the 'intuitive knowledge.' He was now styled *Jina*, the conqueror, or *Mahavira*, the great hero. Mahavira was in his forty-third year when he began his ministry.

Mahavira, during the next thirty years of his life, travelled over

Teachings of Mahavira and Buddha compared northern and southern Bihar but he dwelt mainly in Magadha. He paid several visits to the kings Bimbisara and Ajatashatru both of whom showed him honour and respect.

In his religious teachings, Mahavira, like the Buddha, is a believer in the dualistic philosophy of the Sankhya School and holds that Matter and Soul are the only two ever-existing elements and that there is no Supreme Creative Being which is responsible for the creation of the universe. But here the parallel ends. The Buddha does not discuss the matter further, whereas Mahavira completely denies the existence of God. According to him, the *Jiva* or the *Atman* (soul) by divesting itself of the impurity of Karma, during the course of its successive births, is able to achieve divine perfection. God, according to Mahavira is only 'the highest and the fullest manifestation of all the powers latent in man (the most perfect man).' The Jains further believe that all nature, even that which seems inanimate like stones in quarries, plants and air, etc., possesses life and feels pain on the infliction of injuries.¹ Like the Buddhists, the Jains too, do not care for the Vedas or the Vedic rituals. But they accept as the Buddhists do, the Hindu doctrines of Karma and Punarjanma.

The highest ideal set before his followers by Mahavira is, again like the Buddha, that of Nirvana or the state of eternal bliss which knows no more of births and deaths. The means of attaining this end, which is prescribed by both, is not the performance of the Vedic rituals and sacrifices, but a very holy, ethical and elevating mode of life. Even in this, as in their conception of God, the difference between the views of the two teachers is noticeable. The Buddha, as we have mentioned before, originally sought freedom from transmigration in penance and self-torture, but he soon found that this was not the way to peace and consequently gave it up and did not enjoin it upon his followers. Mahavira, on the other hand, practised asceticism in its severest form and found the road to deliverance and accordingly recommended extreme penance to his followers. Even the suppression of the life element in the body by a process of slow starvation is recommended when the human soul has cleansed itself from the impurities of present and past lives.

Like Gautama Buddha, Mahavira also laid stress in his teachings on ethical and holy life for an individual. He added a couple of principles to those of Parsavanath and enjoined upon his followers the following five moral precepts: (i) not to injure life, (ii) not to steal, (iii) not to possess any property, (iv) not to tell lies and (v) to live a chaste life.

¹Mahavira, in this respect, seems to have anticipated modern science which attributes a rudimentary state of consciousness to plants and other objects in the vegetable kingdom.

The forces which helped in the spread of Jainism were almost the same which had operated in the case of Buddhism: the use of common dialect in place of Sanskrit, the simple and homely moral precepts in place of subtle and unintelligible doctrines of God and Soul, the free ministration of spiritual truths to the common folk. The Jains, too, like the Buddhists had their organised Order of monks and nuns which proved of immense help in spreading the Jain faith. The inscriptional and literary evidence seems to indicate that in its earlier stages, the success of Jainism was more remarkable than that of Buddhism. It made its way, though gradually, in all parts of India. The king Kharvela of Orissa patronised the Jain faith in the second century before Christ and in course of time it spread southwards through the whole of the Tamil country. Under the patronage of Amogh Varsha and Kumar-pala of Gujarat, Jainism made considerable progress in western India and in Rajputana. Much of the trade in flourishing towns like Bombay and in some towns in Gujarat is even to-day in the hands of enterprising Jain traders.

*Spread of
Jainism*

Some two hundred years after the demise of Mahavira, his followers were divided into two groups namely Digambaras or the sky-clad or naked and the Svetambaras or the white-robed. For what reason and at what time this schism broke out is not precisely known. The traditional account attributes the origin of this division to the well-known exodus of the Jains of Northern India to the Deccan during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya. It is stated that, owing to the severe famine which prevailed in Magadha, the Jain patriarch, Bhadrabahu, migrated with a large number of his followers to the Karnataka country, now Mysore and Kanara in southern India. Those who stayed behind chose Sthulbhadra as their head. They held a Council at Pataliputra and re-arranged their literature and gave a new name to their books viz. the Angas—the old books being called the Purvas. At the same time, the monks gave up their old custom of going about naked and put on white clothing. They also admitted nuns into the Sangha. These changes were not approved by Bhadrabahu and his followers when they returned to Magadha, after twelve years. This, according to the traditional account, led to the schism in the church.

*Digambaras
and
Svetambaras*

Another religious sect of the sixth century B.C. which deserves a passing notice is the one known as the Ajivaka sect. This, too, was a sect of the ascetics whose great teacher was Gosala. Unfortunately, we do not know much about the early life and career of Gosala. In Jain literature, he is referred to as Gosala Maukhliputra whose chief place of residence was the city of Sarasvati, the capital of the kingdom of Kosala. It is also stated in the Jain books that

The Ajivakas

Gosala became attached to Mahavira and worked with that great Teacher for about six years but eventually separated himself and founded a new sect of the Ajivakas. This sect continued to exist till the time of Asoka who built the famous Sudama cave (Gaya) for the Ajivaka monks.

Buddhism and Jainism, as we have already explained, represent an attempt on the part of the scions of the noble Kshatriya families to reform the prevailing Brahminism of the sixth century before Christ. In their search for truth, both Gautama Buddha and Mahavira, did not strike a new path but followed the old one; and they only diverged from it when they felt convinced that the orthodox Brahminic path led them no farther near the truth. The goal they placed before themselves was the same as that which a Brahmin strove to attain, namely Moksa or freedom from the round of birth and death. Accordingly, they both accepted the Brahminic doctrines of Karma and the transmigration of souls, which are requisite, or rather indispensable factors for the attainment of final bliss. Where they differed from the orthodox school was their belief in the automatic and relentless working of the Law of Karma. Both Mahavira and the Buddha place the Dharma or the Law of Karma, over and above all creatures whether men or gods. All must obey this Law. God or gods cannot alter the course of the Dharma. Hence the Brahminic practice of pleasing the gods by the performance of Vedic rites and by the chanting of Vedic hymns was of no help in the achievement of Moksa. Moksa could be attained by a person by his own efforts and as the result of his own good actions but not by the mediation of God or gods who are themselves subject to the Law of Karma. They both ignore or deny the belief in God as the creator of the universe, much, as the Brahmin followers of the Sankhya school of philosophy would do.

Both Gautama Buddha and Mahavira advocated the virtue of leading a calm, holy and moral life, and also abstention from sinful thoughts and actions and from injury by word or deed to any living being. Neither seriously meddled with the Brahminic gods nor with the prevailing social order. Even their attack on the caste system was directed only to the fact that the mere accident of birth must not be sufficient to determine one's caste and that the position of honour claimed by a Brahmin must be conceded only for reasons of moral, spiritual and intellectual superiority.

The system of austerities so warmly advocated by Mahavira was akin to the Tapas Marga practised by some of the prevailing Brahminic schools. Again, the basic formula underlying the teachings of Gautama and Mahavira that Desire was the root-cause of re-birth was only another form of the old teachings

*Brahminism
Buddhism and
Jainism—a
review*

of the Upanishadas which explain that "the impulse through which the manifold life of the world came into being was Kama or Desire." Thus, the main doctrines of Buddhism and Jainism will, on examination, appear to be only ancient Hindu doctrines cast in a new form and offered to men of all castes and nations, and not to the Aryan Hindus alone.

The difference, however, between Brahminism and the new movements lies more in their respective organisations than in their fundamental teachings. The new movements had each a well-organised Sangha of devoted missionaries, whereas Hinduism had no such organisation. The Hindu *Sanyasin* individually undertook to disseminate the Vedic lore. He belonged to no organised order of missionaries. He performed his round of daily prayers singly and not in a congregation as a Buddhist or a Jain *Bhikshu* would do. He built no temples and was not attached to a monastic house like his Jain or Buddhist brethren. It was in these monastic houses that the church councils were held to settle important questions concerning the whole body of the Buddhists, but no such organization existed in Hinduism where the great Brahmin teachers could hold their church synods.¹

The progress of the Buddhist and the Jain movements, without doubt, exercised considerable influence in shaping the course of the history of the country in its various aspects: cultural, religious, social and political. It gave, in the first place, a powerful impulse to religious architecture. The monastic houses were built all over the country to give permanent abodes to the Buddhist and Jain monks. The

Buddhist and Jain influence on the course of Indian History

Stambhas or pillars bearing religious emblems were raised by pious adherents of the two sects in honour of the great Teachers and other holy men. Again, big stupas of stone were raised over the relics of the Buddha and the Boddhisatvas. These new buildings and monuments were richly carved and ornamented and thus, in course of time, a new style of architecture and sculpture came into being. Some pieces of Buddhist sculpture are regarded as the finest specimens of art in the world. The Buddhist and Jain monasteries, as we have had occasion to observe before, came to serve the purpose of free educational centres where the common folk had their lessons on moral and spiritual truths from the monks. More than this. It was in these monasteries that the beginnings of vernacular (Prakrit) literature were made which, in course of time, grew up into an extensive body of literature.

In the domain of Hindu religion of the later period, we find unmistakable evidence of the influence of Buddhist thought and ethics. Even though these heterodox religious movements

¹For a comparison of Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism see also pages 58 and pages 56-57.

were never able to dislodge Brahminism from its high pedestal for very long, yet they left on it a permanent impress of their own. The principles of Ahimsa or non-injury to living beings, for instance, which Gautama Buddha and Mahavira so devoutly preached and practised, were incorporated bodily in their teachings by the Brahmins of later days. Similarly, the institution of the Matha or organised brotherhoods of Sadhus, is a feature which was introduced in Hindu society as the result of its contact with Jainism and Buddhism. Again, the practice of worshipping personal gods, making images of theirs, and raising temples in their honour was adopted by the Brahmins in imitation of the Mahayana Buddhists.

The course of the political history of the country, too, reveals, here and there, sure signs of the Buddhist and Jain influence. The adoption of the Buddhist pacifist creed by Asoka, as is so well-known, proved a serious set-back to the imperial policy of the rulers of Magadha. Not only did it seriously hinder the course of its territorial expansion but the extraordinary humane policy of Asoka jeopardised the very existence of the empire. For want of proper occupation for a continuous period of thirty years, the Asokan army lost its morale and subsequently failed to make a stand when the Bactrian Greeks invaded the country. He devoted all his time and attention to the missionary activities rather than to improving or maintaining the efficiency of his army. In his council and cabinet, too, the Emperor, probably, gave a more prominent place to the Buddhist Mahamatra than to a Brahmin statesman and financier. The policy of the state, no doubt, became more humane and philanthropic and the code of punishment, too, was revised and made more benevolent and sympathetic. The government under Asoka extended also its sphere of activities and undertook to provide free hospitals for men and beasts alike. The institution of *Pinjrapols* and the *Go-shalas*, which forms a feature of Hindu charitable institutions to-day, very probably, had their origin in the Asokan free hospitals for animals. Thus, the Buddhist and Jain influence on the general trend of life in India was real, substantial and cannot be minimised.

There is yet another aspect of the question which demands notice. Buddhism, as we know, proved to be one of the greatest civilizing forces which India gave to the neighbouring countries. The foreign converts to this religion considered India as the Holy Land and a pilgrimage to this country came to be the highest ambition of their lives. This tie of religion came to bind many a foreigner with our country.

NOTES

The 6th century B.C. witnessed the birth of a number of religious sects in India although only two stood the test of time and survived. The reasons for the rise and growth of these sects are to be sought in the

spiritual and moral unrest that prevailed in society. The caste system was growing rigid and the spiritual interests of the sudra class were very much neglected and they were also denied many social privileges. The Brahmins paid no heed to them. The religious ceremonies were also becoming very elaborate and expensive which an average man could not afford to perform. On many occasions, these ceremonies were accompanied by actual slaughter of animals, which practice, the more humane element in society did not like. Again, the spiritual teaching of the Brahminic religion was done by means of Sanskrit language which was not intelligible to every man. Thus there was room for religious reformers who would tend to the spiritual needs of the common folk and do so free of charge; who would teach them spiritual truths in their spoken language and give them moral lessons which they would understand and be able to comprehend. Gautama Buddha and Mahavira did so and the people who were parching with spiritual thirst, flocked to them.

THEIR TEACHINGS

Hinduism	Buddhism	Jainism
1. Belief in God, Matter and Soul, as three self-existent entities: and God as Creator of the Universe.	1. Belief in Matter and Soul, as two self-existent entities. God finds no room in the Buddhist scheme of the world.	1. Belief same as of the Buddhists-viz: Matter and Soul, rather a step forward—a definite denial of the existence of God.
2. The Vedas are regarded as divine and the Vedic rituals as essential for Salvation.	2. The Vedic authority is denied and the Vedic rituals are considered unnecessary for Salvation.	2. Same as in Buddhism.
3. Belief in the doctrines of Transmigration and Karma.	3. The same as in Brahminism rather stronger faith in the theory of Karma.	3. As in Buddhism.

THEIR PRACTICES

1. Performance of elaborate ceremonies and recital of daily-prayers.	1. Few or no ceremonies or prayers. The Buddhists lay stress only on moral and virtuous life as leading to Salvation.	1. As in Buddhism. The Jains also add penance and austerity to the virtuous conduct for attaining Salvation.
2. Brahminic ceremonies were accompanied by slaughter of animals.	2. Buddhism advocated Ahimsa or non-injury to life.	2. As in Buddhism—rather a step forward. Jains believed in the principle of life in the vegetable kingdom too.
3. Spiritual and religious ministrations	3. The Buddhists administered spiritual	3. Same as in Buddhism.

through Sanskrit—the language of the scriptures.

knowledge through the spoken language of the people and also composed their scriptures in that.

- | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------|
| 4. A Brahmin would discuss higher problems of life here and life <i>hereafter</i> . | 4. A Buddhist would emphasise only on virtuous conduct in <i>this</i> life and on <i>this</i> earth. | 4. Same as in Buddhism. |
|---|--|-------------------------|

SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

- | | | |
|--|---|-------------------------|
| 1. Brahminic society was organised on four-fold division of the caste in which the Brahmin caste had precedence. | 1. The Buddhists recognised no priestly class as such viz: one which was based on accident of birth. It was rather democratic in which a low-born had the same privileges as a high-born provided his moral conduct justified this privilege. | 1. Same as in Buddhism. |
| 2. Brahminism had no regular order of Monks or Nuns. | 2. Buddhism instituted such an order. | 2. Same as in Buddhism. |

The causes of the rapid spread of these movements were mostly identical with those that brought them into being. Their monastic organizations further supplied them with a large number of devoted, zealous, and sincere workers who carried the message of love to the very cottages of the poor and the courts of the princes. (For details look up the body of the text under this head).

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the religious and social circumstances which favoured the rise and growth of Buddhism and Jainism.
2. Trace the careers of Mahavira and Gautama Buddha.
3. Explain the teachings of Gautama Buddha and Mahavira.
4. Institute a comparison between the practices and religious dogmas of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.
5. "Mahavira and Gautama Buddha aimed at the reforming of the prevailing Brahminism. They had no intention of founding sects separate from Hinduism"—Comment on the above.
6. In what manner did Buddhism and Jainism influence the course of Indian history?

CHAPTER V

The Pre-Mauryan Age 650—321 B.C.

SECTION I. RISE AND GROWTH OF MAGADHA.

The political history of Northern India, before the rise of the Mauryan dynasty, is available only in scattered form in the Jain and the Buddhist literature.¹ As many as sixteen kingdoms,² besides small republican and tribal States are mentioned in the Buddhist books. It appears further that in course of time, some of the weaker kingdoms were absorbed by their stronger neighbour, and that by the close of the 6th century B.C., four of these kingdoms divided among themselves, the major portion of Northern India. These were :—

- (1) Avanti which had overshadowed and finally absorbed the territories of the kingdoms of the Matsyas and the Surasenas.
- (2) Kosala was another which rose to prominence at the expense of its weaker neighbour, viz., the kingdom of Kasi.
- (3) Magadha under its able rulers of the Sisunaga dynasty began to swallow piecemeal the territories of the Angas and the Vajjis.
- (4) The Vatsa and the Chedi kingdoms together formed a strong union and assumed the role of a buffer State between the three powerful neighbours namely, Kosala, Magadha and Avanti.

Of these four again, the kingdom of Magadha gradually rose to be the paramount power in Northern India and triumphed over its rivals during the course of the two following centuries.

The rise and growth of Magadha 600—321 B.C.

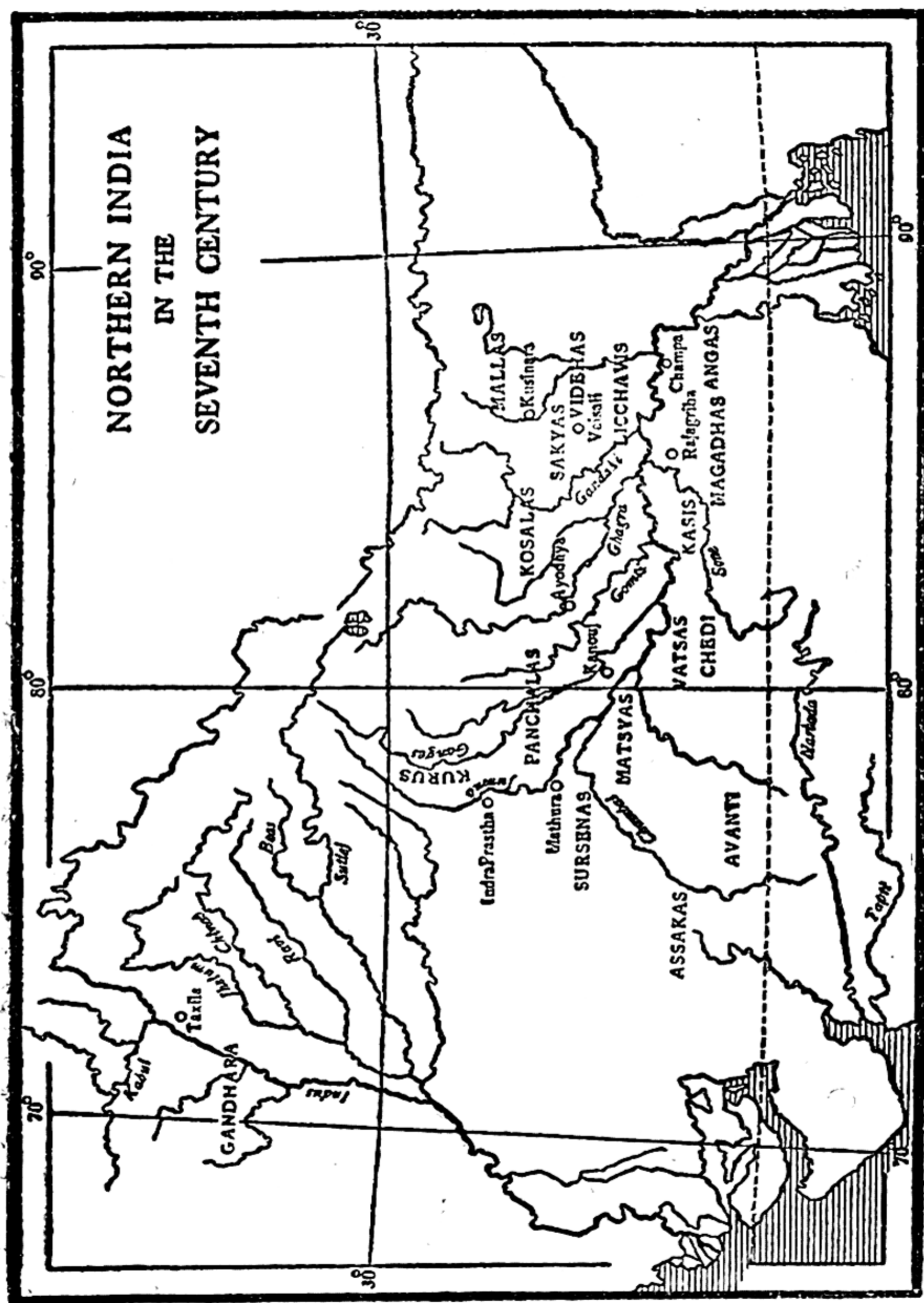
The first important king who ruled over Magadha, was Bimbisara or Srenika. He was a contemporary of Gautama Buddha

¹For a description of these books see foot-note on P. 11.

²These were: (i) Kasi (Benares), (ii) Kosala (Lucknow), (iii) The Mallas (Gorakpur), (iv) Vatsa (Allahabad), (v) Chedi (Cawnpur), (vi) Kuru (Delhi), (vii) Panchala (Rohilkhand), (viii) Matsya (Jaipur), (ix) Surasena (Mathura), (x) Assaka along the river Godavari, (xi) Avanti (Ujjain), (xii) Anga (Champa), (xiii) Magadha, (xiv) Vajji (Vaisali), (xv) Gandhara (Peshawar), (xvi) Kamboja in the neighbourhood of Gandhara. Among the tribal republics may be mentioned the Sakyas of Kapilvastu, the Lichhavis of Vaisali and the Videhas of Mithia and the Moriyas of Pippalivana.

and Mahavira. He is considered as the real founder of the imperial power of Magadha. He conquered the neighbouring kingdom of Anga and gained thereby the control of the lower course of the river

Bimbisara 543
—491 B.C.



Ganges, though further expansion in this direction was not possible owing to natural difficulties. Bimbisara, therefore, sought to extend his dominion to the north and north-west. He married the daughter of the king of Kosala who brought a part

of the kingdom of Kasi in her dowry. By another marriage with a Lichchhavi princess, Bimbisara strengthened his northern frontier. From the accounts given in the Jain and Buddhist books, it appears, that Bimbisara was a vigorous ruler and his administration was efficient. He reigned for fifty years and is said to have been starved to death by his son Ajatashatru.

The patricide king proved to be the greatest of the line of the Bimbisara rulers of Magadha.¹ He extended considerably the boundaries of his kingdom and laid the foundations of its future greatness. His earliest military enterprise was a war with the king of Kosala, who had withheld the payment of the revenues of that part of Kasi which had been given in dowry to Bimbisara, because he was enraged at Ajatashatru's unfilial conduct. A fierce and protracted struggle ensued between him and Prasenajit, king of Kosala. After many vicissitudes, Ajatashatru triumphed over his opponent and the vast kingdom of Kasi and a greater part of Kosala were absorbed in the expanding empire of Magadha. He next invaded the land of the Lichchhavis, north of the Ganges, now known as Tirhut. He took Vaisali, the capital, and annexed the State of Videha,² thus extending his territory northwards to the foot of the mountains. As a strategic measure, he built a great fortress at the junction of the rivers Son and Ganges, which subsequently developed into the famous city of Pataliputra. Magadha, under Ajatashatru thus became a dominant power in eastern India and its rulers claimed undisputed sway over the whole region between the Ganges and the Himalayas.

Ajatashatru
491—459 B. C.

It is, indeed, a pity that we do not know much about the successors of Ajatashatru. The Buddhist and Jain traditions and the Puranas are at variance with one another. According to the Puranas, Darsaka succeeded Ajatashatru but the Buddhist and Jain writers make no mention of him and hold that Udayin was Ajatashatru's son and successor. But the recent discovery of the poet Bhasa's play, *Svapna-Vasavadatta*, has established the existence of Darsaka. Udayin came after Darsaka and was his son. It was in the time of Udayin that the capital of Magadha was moved from Rajgriha to Pataliputra—the choice was, probably, due to the strategic importance of the new city and also because of the fact that it occupied a more central position than the old Rajgriha, in the expanding empire.

Successors of
Ajatashatru

¹ References to the Magadha people occur in the Rigveda, but they are spoken of rather with contempt as people living outside the pale of Aryan culture and religion. In the Mahabharata war, Jarasandh, the ruler of Magadha is said to have fought on the side of the Kurus.

² Ajatashatru's success over the Vaisali kingdom is attributed to his more efficient artillery. This artillery was 'a kind of ballista which threw huge stones—an ancestor of the armoured car—a chariot fitted with death-dealing weapons which wrought great havoc.' The Cambridge Shorter History of India Vol. I p. 18.

Udayin's successors were nonentities. The chief minister of the king named Sisunaga, therefore, taking advantage of the situation seized the throne for himself and founded a new line of rulers known as the Sisunaga dynasty. The Sisunagas ruled over Magadha for about a century when last of them was overthrown by Mahapadma who initiated another line of rulers known as that of the Nandas.

This account is based on the Ceylonese chronicles. The account given by the Puranas is different. According to the Puranas Sisunaga was an ancestor of Bimbisara and founder of the dynasty to which Bimbisara and Ajatashatru belonged. The successors of Udayin, according to this version were Nandivardhan and Mahanandi. Mahanandi is said to have married a low-caste woman named Mura. She fell in love with a barber named Mahapadma Nanda who killed Mahanandi, married Mura and eventually seized the throne and founded his own dynasty of rulers called the Nanda dynasty.

The accounts of the Nanda kings in the Puranas, as well as in the Jain and the Buddhist literature, are very confused. On one point, however, all seem to agree namely that the founder of the Nanda line of rulers was a usurper and probably of low origin. But the fact that he is described in the Puranas as 'the destroyer of all the Kshatriyas and as sole monarch' seems to suggest that Mahapadma Nanda was endowed with a remarkable military genius. Indeed, he succeeded in bringing many neighbouring kingdoms under his rule. After his time we certainly hear no more of smaller kingdoms like the Kasis, the Panchalas, the Kurus, the Surasenas and others which, in all probability, were absorbed in the expanding empire of Magadha. Mahapadma Nanda or one of his successors is also credited with the conquest of Kalinga, as this fact is referred to in the Hathigumpha inscription of King Kharvela.

Mahapadma was succeeded by eight other kings of his family, the last of whom was overthrown by Chandragupta Maurya. Their accounts in the traditional literature, as we have already observed, are confusing and uncertain. The period of their rule altogether comprised about half a century.

Whatever be the origin and the geneology of Mahapadma Nanda, one fact, is clear that he proved to be a great conqueror and vigorous ruler, and that the empire of Magadha under him and his successor became a mighty empire, extending from Bay of Bengal in the east to the Sutlej in the west. Again, according to all accounts, Indian as well as Greek, the Nandas possessed immense wealth and vast military resources. The historians of Alexander estimated the military strength of the Nandas at 200,000 infantry, 20,000 cavalry, 2,000 four-horsed

chariots and more than 3,000 war elephants.

The rise, growth and expansion of the kingdom of Magadha sums up the history of Northern and North-eastern India during the three hundred odd years beginning with the middle of the seventh century B.C. This phenomenal rise of a small state, which originally was not larger than the Patna and Gaya districts of modern Bihar, was due to various reasons. Amongst these, one was the geographical position of the State itself and the natural advantages which its rulers enjoyed by having control over the waterways of the Ganges and its tributaries. The able rulers like Bimbisara and his son, Ajatashatru did as much to extend the dominions of Magadha as, perhaps, their Nanda successors did to develop its revenue and military resources. But we must also remember that if the fertility of its soil combined with the ability of its kings proved helpful to the rulers of Magadha in building up her greatness, the weakness of its rivals had no small share in this process. Prasenajit of Kosala, who for a long time offered such a stubborn opposition to Ajatashatru was succeeded by Virudhaka—a feeble and cruel prince. The Kosala kingdom under his rule fell an easy prey to the ambitious kings of Magadha. The kingdom of Avanti which, at one time, was as powerful as Magadha, had frittered away its resources in a prolonged struggle against the Vatsas of Kausambi with the result that it failed to make a stand when the invasion came from Magadha. Hence, by the time that Chandragupta Maurya came to power, Magadha had already become the premier state in Northern India.

Causes of the growth of Magadha

The Jain and the Buddhist literature, particularly the Jataka books, are full of information relating to the social and economic life of Northern India during the period of three hundred years which preceded the foundation of the Mauryan Empire.

Social conditions

Society, as a whole, continued to be organised on the basis of caste. The preachings of Gautama Buddha and Mahavira that one's caste must not be determined on the mere accident of his birth, had not met with popular acceptance. It had come to happen rather the other way about; and a Kshatriya or Brahmin remained a member of his caste even if he never took to the profession of a soldier or a priest. The Jataka stories abound in instances which reveal that the Kshatriyas, other than those who joined the army or whose lot it was to become rulers, often tilled the soil and took to agricultural pursuits. Similarly, the Brahmins indulged in trade and manual work without losing their caste or social position. The great mass of the population were Sudras who worked for hire and were engaged in small handicrafts. Below the Sudras were other *hina-jati* or low tribes and low occupations (*hina-silpa*), such as bird catchers, mat-makers,

barbers, leather-workers and potters. The *Chandalas* or the out-castes were placed lowest in the social scale.

We have already said that the sixth century B.C. was a period of religious ferment in India and in other parts of Asia. The *Religious conditions* domination of the priestly classes as well as the utter neglect on their part, to attend to the spiritual needs of the poorer classes had led to a feeling of revolt against them. A man in the street would welcome any religious reformer or a moralist who would soothe his spiritual cravings. The Buddhist books mention more than sixty religious teachers who had set up protestant movements and to whom the people began to flock in large numbers. Buddha and Mahavira were also amongst these teachers.

The glimpses of life in towns and cities, as given in the Jataka stories, show that the people lived as comfortably in these early times as they do now, if some of the more modern amenities introduced in life as the result of scientific inventions are eliminated. Among the *Economic and social life in towns* population of the towns, we find specific mention of physicians, surgeons, accountants and clerks, jewellers and smiths, workers in ivory and dealers in precious stones, wood-carvers and masons, dyers of cloth, dhobis, weavers of silk and cotton, cloth merchants, sellers of perfumes and drugs, sellers of grain, vegetables and fruits, barbers, cooks and servants, sweetmeat and garland makers, and so on. In the cities, all the workmen following a particular occupation usually lived together in streets or wards as they do even today. Again, there is good deal of evidence to show that trade and professions, particularly the more important ones, were organised into guilds or *Srenyas* each under a president or *pramukha* who settled all disputes in the guild.

There were not many towns, however, in those days, and we do not find more than twenty of them mentioned in contemporary literature. The most important towns were Sravasti, Champa, Rajgriha, Saketa, Kausambi, Benares, Ujjain and Taxila in the north-west. Pataliputra had not yet been built.

Most of the people lived then, as now, in closely clustered villages and followed the peaceful pursuit of agriculture. Each family had its own fields which were cultivated by the owner and his sons, although, at times, they would also employ hired labour. Rice, barley and sugarcane were the principal crops. There is no mention of landlords owning large estates nor of beggars and very poor men in villages. Each village had a common grazing ground for its cattle. A remarkable feature of Indian village life, from time immemorial, has been its corporate existence; and we gather from these Buddhist books that all able-bodied villagers united together to make tanks, irrigation

canals and roads for the common benefit of the village. The administrative affairs of the village were managed by the village council under a head man, who was selected by the council and not by the king of the country. It was the head man who was responsible for the collection of State revenues which ranged from a twelfth to a sixth of the gross produce of the land. The State share of the grain was collected in kind and stored in government granaries in different parts of the country as a protection against famine or drought. On the whole, each village was self-sufficient and life was simple and unsophisticated.

Outside the towns and villages there were few roads worthy of the name. For purposes of trade and commerce there existed a few trade routes of long standing, which linked up the principal centres of trade in various parts of India. One of these was the old caravan route which connected Taxila with the trade centres of Central Asia on one side and, by a long winding road, with Sravasti, Nalanda, and Rajgriha within India on the other. Branch routes also connected Sravasti, Ujjain, Kausambi and Benares which were flourishing trade centres in the northern and western parts of the country. Goods were carried both on pack animals and two-wheeled bullock carts; and long strings of these moved together under the protection of hired escorts. The goods that were taken long distances were consequently of small bulk and much value like silks, muslins, precious stones, jewellery, ivory ware, perfumes and drugs, etc. The absence of good roads and sense of security on the highway must have hampered the easy flow of trade. Another factor that seriously hampered the smooth and easy flow of trade within the country was the practice of each petty ruler to levy a tax on all goods that passed through his territory.

Trade and communications

Trade with countries outside India was also kept up by the land and sea routes. The great Asiatic land route passed through Gandhara and Central Asia and terminated on the coast of the Mediterranean, whereas the trade with Arabia and the western countries was carried on by the sea routes of the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. There is also evidence to show that sea-borne trade was maintained with Ceylon and Sumatra and Malaya Peninsula through the Bay of Bengal. (See also pp. 141—42).

Except in very big towns coins were not much in use. The old way of buying and selling by barter prevailed throughout the country. Even the copper coins which sometimes were put into circulation were not issued by any king but only by private corporations or guilds. To ensure credit for their purity and weight, these corporate bodies, often used to put a punch mark on them. Ordinarily the value of things was determined by the quantity of grain (rice) or by heads of cattle.

The Buddhist books speak of kingships big and small as well as of republican forms of governments prevailing in tribal territories.

*Governmental
organization*

In the States governed by kings, the ruler enjoyed special prerogatives and privileges. As a matter of routine, a ruler's son succeeded him on the throne unless he was specially debarred for reasons of grave misconduct. The king had the right to levy taxes and grant pardon to offenders. He had large forests reserved for shooting and hunting. The *Sabhas* and *Samitis* of the Old Vedic age had practically disappeared and the ruler only took counsel with his departmental ministers. The republics, however, represented the old organization of the Vedic times, where the whole tribe directly or through its senior members took part in the administration of their country. It were these men who elected their ruler or the Chief Executive Officer for a definite period of time. He held the title of Raja. His authority was limited. The laws were made by the assembly of the clansmen.¹ These assemblies had their regular meetings. But the days of such republics were numbered. They were rapidly being absorbed by the rising and expanding monarchies.

SECTION II. FOREIGN CONTACTS

About the time when the kings of the Bimbisara dynasty had started the process of unifying Northern India under the primacy

*Persian occu-
pation of the
Indus Valley*

of Magadha, the north-western provinces of the country were slipping into the hands of the rulers of Persia. Cyrus or Kurush (Kai-khusrau) of the Achaemenian family, was a great and resourceful soldier. He succeeded in over-throwing the old and effete empires of Media, Babylonia, Assyria and Lydia and laid the foundations of a new empire of Persia about the middle of the sixth century B.C. Cyrus was followed by a line of equally ambitious, energetic and able rulers, who extended still further the bounds of the new empire both westwards and eastwards till they stretched as far as the Mediterranean on one side and the Indus on the other.

We do not know with certainty when and by which king of the Achaemenian dynasty, the Indian provinces were conquered; though it is believed to be the work of Darius I in or about the year 517—516 B.C.²

Darius is said to have sent his admiral Skylax to explore the mouths of the Indus. This Ionian Greek navigator sailed down the river to the sea and reached the shores of Egypt through the

¹Some of the republican governments are mentioned to have had regular police officers, who were "distinguished by a special headgear, and who were notorious for extortion and violence."

²The Bahistan inscription of Darius I, believed to have been inscribed about 520-518 B.C. does not mention India among the twenty-three provinces which obeyed that king. But the other two inscriptions of the same king—

Red Sea, after a voyage of thirty months. The expedition of Darius followed, and a portion of the Panjab was annexed to the empire. The portion thus annexed comprised the whole of the Indus valley and, probably, stretched as far as the Salt Range in the Jhelum district. The Panjab dominions of Darius formed the richest and most populous of the twenty satrapies or provinces, into which the empire of Persia was divided and paid 360 talents of gold dust as annual tribute. The tribute which would, today, be worth about £1,000,000 is further estimated to have been equal to one-third of the whole revenues of the empire.

The earliest allusions to the Indian provinces of the Persian Empire are to be found in the historical work of the Greek writer Herodotus. He tells us that there was an Indian contingent (Gandhara and the Panjab) in the army of Xerxes (480—465 B.C.) when he invaded Greece. This was the first occasion when the Panjab soldiers fought on European soil. Speaking of the equipment of the Indian soldiers, Herodotus observes that they were clad in quilted cotton garments and armed with cane-bows and iron-tipped cane arrows and rode in chariots driven by horses and wild asses. Herodotus' account seems to show that the Greeks of his time were not familiar with the use of cotton which had been known in India for ages. He says that the dress of an Indian soldier is made of 'wool which grows on trees, and is more beautiful and valuable than that produced from sheep.'

*Mention of
India in
connection
with Persia*

How long the Persians held the Panjab we do not know. We learn from Greek historians that the Panjab contingent formed a part of the Persian army with which Darius III met Alexander the Great for the last time on the battlefield of Arbela in 331 B.C. But whether this Indian contingent was sent by the Panjab princes in response to an appeal from a friend and neighbour, or in obedience to the requisition made by a suzerain power is not certain. This much, however, seems certain that the Persian emperor exercised little or no effective control over his Indian provinces about this time and that the Panjab was divided into a large number of independent kingdoms and republics when Alexander entered India in 327 B.C.

*Results of the
Persian connection with India*

But the peaceful relations established during the period of Persian domination appear to have been maintained for a long time and proved useful to both countries. The trade of India with the West during this period, received a fresh stimulus from one in the tablets on the platform of his palace in Persepolis and the other on his tomb at Naqsh-i-Rustam which are of later date 518-515 B.C.—specially mention India as part of the Persian Empire. The term employed in these inscriptions is Hidu, a corruption of Hindu, which is an old Persian form of the word Sindhu (Indus).

the fact that the great Asiatic land routes, which terminated on the Mediterranean on one side and on the Indus on the other, were all controlled by the emperor of Persia. The commercial intercourse also facilitated an interchange of social and political ideas between the two countries and the example of the growth of an empire in Persia, not improbably, gave birth to the idea of unification of Northern India first under the Sisunagas and then under the Mauryas. Again, the artistic works of Asoka, his pillars in particular, with round bell-shaped *abaci* and bull or lion capitals are, very likely, of pure Persian origin. Even the style and the form of the Edicts of this great Buddhist emperor of India, seem to have been suggested by the inscriptions of the great Darius of Persia. The use of the Kharoshti alphabet in Gandhara and the Panjab, which continued down to the third century A.D., can be traced back to the period of Persian domination in these parts of India. It is believed that this alphabet was evolved by the subordinate Indian clerks of the Persian officials from the Aramaic alphabet. Marked Persian influence has been traced even in some of the social customs prevailing at Taxila. The Mauryan emperor Chandragupta, it has been suggested, introduced some of the court ceremonials of the Persian emperors; and also employed in the Mauryan imperial service, Persian noblemen of ability and administrative experience. Tushaspha, for instance, was one whose name and designation as governor of Kathiawar is preserved in the Junagadh (Girnar) rock inscription.

The invasion of Alexander is another important political and military event in the Pre-Mauryan history of India. This invasion, in a way, may be said to have come in the wake of Indo-Persian political connections. The Persian invasions of Greece during the reign of Xerxes had provoked great national resentment among the Greek people and princes, and they continued to nurse these feelings for generations, till, Alexander determined to invade Persia and avenge the national wrong. In fact, Alexander's father Philip, ruler of Macedonia, had already made his plans for the conquest of Asia but, before these could mature, his career was cut short by assassination in 335 B.C. When he ascended the throne of Macedonia, Alexander was not yet quite twenty years of age. But, as his subsequent career shows, he had, even at that young age, all the qualities that go to make a great soldier and conqueror. Immediately on taking reins of government young Alexander set about making preparations for the herculean task of overthrowing the empire of the Achaemenians.

He crossed the Hellespont in 334 B.C. with an army of some thirty thousand infantry and five thousand cavalry, overcame

Alexander's invasion—its genesis

the Persian army at Issus, and then turned towards Syria and captured the important naval station of Tyre. Alexander continued his march southwards and by a flanking movement took possession of the Persian province of Egypt, where he founded and garrisoned the city of Alexandria, at the mouth of the Nile.

*Subjugation of
the Persian
Empire by
Alexander
334—330 B.C.*

Having thus established his line of communication with his distant base in Macedonia, Alexander advanced into the interior of the empire, defeated Darius at Arbela and pursued his victorious march to Babylon and to Susa and on to Persepolis, the capital of Persia. Thus, by the year 330 B.C. the greatest empire of the age lay prostrate at the feet of the victor.

The Macedonian invader next aimed at the reduction of the eastern provinces of the empire, which, at one time, had included Gandhara and the Panjab. For this purpose, Alexander selected the city now known as Kandahar to serve as his base of operations. This was another strategic point where he built a fort and garrisoned it with his Greek soldiers. Between 330 B.C. and 328 B.C. Alexander conquered Bactria, Sogdiana and the Kabul valley.¹ It was in the Kabul valley that Alexander received and accepted the invitation of Ambhi, the king of Taxila to march on India.

About 350 B.C. the Persian Empire became very weak and many of its provinces asserted their independence. The hill country, to the west of the Indus, as well as the Panjab beyond the Indus came to be divided into a number of small chiefships. These rulers were jealous of each other and unable to unite against a common enemy. Amongst these, the more important were the following:—

*The Panjab on
the eve of
Alexander's
invasion*

- (1) The Ashvaka kingdom of Udayana with capital Massaga was situated to the north of the Malakand Pass. The king had a powerful army comprising infantry, cavalry and a brigade of war elephants.
- (2) The kingdom of Abhisara was situated among the hills of Hazara, Poonch, Bhimbar and Rajauri. It was, probably, an off-shoot of the old kingdom of the Kambojas.
- (3) The kingdom of Taxila, situated south of the Abhisara kingdom, was ruled by king Ambhi who subsequently made an alliance with Alexander.
- (4) The kingdom of Porus lay between the rivers Jhelum and Chenab and that of his brother or cousin which stretched in continuation up to the river Ravi.
- (5) Beyond the Ravi dwelt the independent tribes, chief of which was the Catheans of the Greeks or the Katthis of Sanskrit literature, whose capital, Sangala, was situated in the modern Gurdaspur District, somewhere above Amritsar.
- (6) The lower courses of the rivers Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi and

¹ The ruler of the Kabul valley was one Shashigupta.

Bias were occupied by independent and warlike tribes, the chief amongst which were the Siboi (Shibis), the Oxydrakai (Kshudrakas) and the Malloi or the Malwas. All these petty States were too occupied with their own quarrels to think of the common danger and this fact, undoubtedly, facilitated Alexander's task of conquest.

The offer of help and submission made by the ruler of Taxila, was tantamount to the opening of the gateways of the country, and the young Macedonian invader, already flushed with victory over Persia, readily accepted it. Again, the fact that Darius' Indian satrapy used to bring him a large revenue of 360 talents of gold dust every year, perhaps, further

*Alexander's
march upon
India*

whetted Alexander's greed. Accordingly, in the summer of 327 B.C. he set about making necessary preparations for his march upon India. He formed his army into two divisions: one under the command of his most devoted general Peridikkas, was sent direct towards Peshawar under the guidance of Ambhi and his scouts; and the other led by Alexander in person was moved to subdue the war-like people of the Ashvaka tribe living in the Chitral, the Swat and Bajaur valleys.¹ The division under Peridikkas met with little opposition on its march; only the overthrow of Raja Hast whose capital was Pushklavati (Chaharsada in Peshawar district) is recorded by the Greeks. But the division under Alexander encountered fierce fighting for a period of nearly eleven months.²

The two divisions joined early in 326 B.C. and crossed the Indus by a bridge of boats at Ohind, some 16 miles above Attock. Alexander then moved to Taxila where Ambhi paid him a kind of formal homage. The Macedonian army had about a month's rest and relaxation at Taxila, and then, after replenishing their stores, resumed their march upon the kingdom of Porus.

Raja Porus, ruler of Jhelum, had been, all this time, watching the progress of events. He was aware of the unholy alliance which his rival Ambhi had made with the Greek invader, and he also knew that several other hill chiefs in his neighbourhood had made submission to Alexander. But as for himself, he chose to resist the aggressive invasion of his territory by a foreign army. When he received the news of

Battle with

Porus

¹The details of the Siege of Massaga as given by classical historians reveal that the Ashvaka army had given a hard time to the Macedonian invader and the siege was given up only when the Ashvaka Chief had been killed by a chance arrow. Dio-dorus tells us that a division of 7000 Indian soldiers was given a guarantee of safe passage by Alexander if they evacuated the city of Massaga, but when they actually retired to a distance, he fell upon them and made "a great slaughter of their ranks." Commenting on this incident Plutarch observes that "it rests as a foul blot on Alexander's martial fame."

²Alexander raised to the ground all the strong hill forts of the Ashvakas, and placed the country under Shashigupta Sisikattos, ruler of Kabul, who, after his submission had taken service under Alexander

the march of the Greek army, supplemented by a Taxilian contingent of 5,000 horse and foot, Porus collected all his available forces to meet the invader. For several days the two armies kept watching each other's movements, as it was not possible for Alexander to cross the swollen river in the face of a brave and determined enemy who had drawn up 40,000 soldiers in battle-array on the opposite bank of the Jhelum. Alexander had, in the meanwhile, sent spies to find a fordable place. On the receipt of favourable reports, he marched secretly on a night which is described by the Greeks as unusually stormy, some sixteen miles up the course of the river with a picked force of 17,000 horse and foot and crossed it in boats, under the cover of darkness. Porus knew nothing about it until early in the morning the news was brought to him by his scouts.¹ He sent a small force under his son to hinder the landing of the Greek army, but it was too late. A battle ensued and in the meanwhile other divisions of Alexander's army also began to cross the river unopposed.

The Indian army was taken by surprise and the superior discipline of the Macedonian troops combined with the generalship of Alexander gave the invaders a decisive victory after a resolutely contested battle. The Greek cavalry were far stronger than the Indians and were mounted on bigger and better horses.²

The Indian archers, although they were as skilful with bow and arrow as the Greek archers, were fighting under unfavourable conditions. Their bows were long and required to be rested on the ground; but 'the wet weather which had soaked the soil interfered with the proper adjustment of the weapon and caused valuable time to be wasted.' The wet ground also seriously hampered the movements of the heavy Indian chariots which often got stuck up in the mud, whereas the Greek horsemen had the advantage of free motions on the field of battle. Lastly, Porus's elephant brigade, though it scored some success against the Macedonian infantry in the beginning, ultimately proved a source of weakness to his cause. The disciplined Greek soldiers clung close to their ranks and hurled showers of darts at the elephants, with the result that the huge beasts, maddened with

¹Porus was conversant only with the Indian Laws of war which did not sanction night marchings or night attacks.

²As compared to the Central Asian or Western cavalry, the cavalry of India has always been weaker. The indigenous breed of horses of India are poor in size as well as in temper. The Indian horses are light and no heavy cavalry or mail-clad fighter can be mounted on them. Nor could they stand the shock of battle. Like the Greek cavalry, the Muslim cavalry of later days was also heavier than the Rajput cavalry.

pain, turned round and trampled on their own soldiers and threw their ranks into confusion.¹

The losses of the Indian army are estimated at 15,000 killed, including two sons of Porus, and 9,000 taken prisoner, whereas the Greek losses were about 1,000 killed. Porus himself is said to have fought bravely throughout the battle. At one stage of the action, Alexander sent Ambhi with a message to Porus to surrender but 'the proud Indian refused to listen to one whom he regarded as a renegade and hurled a spear at him.' Porus was, however, captured alive at the end and brought before Alexander. Arrian writes that Porus was not at all broken and abashed in spirit and boldly met Alexander as one brave man would meet another brave man after a trial of strength, and made the proud demand, "Treat me, O Alexander! as befits a king." Alexander's chivalrous instincts were roused by the manly demeanour of his Indian adversary and he forthwith 'combining policy with generosity' restored his kingdom to Porus.

To commemorate his victory, Alexander is said to have built two towns, one on the battlefield which he named Nicaea, and the other on the site of his camp which was called Bucephalus, after his favourite charger which had fallen in the fight. Of the two towns, Bucephalus was destined to grow in importance and the modern town of Jhelum is believed to be the successor of Bucephalus. The story of Bucephalus is, perhaps, too well-known to students of history. When this famous horse was brought for sale to king Philip of Macedonia, skilled riders tried in vain to manage him. The boy prince, Alexander, came forward and took the bridle, turned the horse towards the sun, so that it should no longer be frightened by its shadow, coaxed and soothed it, and finally mastered the brute. "O my son," shouted Philip, "look thee out a kingdom equal to and worthy of thyself, for Macedonia is too little for thee." It was, indeed, a prophetic utterance, for within the space of 20 years, the boy who had conquered the horse had conquered Persia and established a vast empire in the east.

After resting his army for a while, Alexander continued his march into the Panjab. He crossed the river Chenab into the territory of another Porus, who, however, fled before him. Leaving a small body of troops under a trusted general to keep this territory safe in his rear, Alexander advanced further and

¹Besides the purely military causes which account for Alexander's success, the small political units into which the country was divided also contributed to his success. Each local ruler was left to his own limited resources both military and monetary and the Macedonians defeated them singly. Later on, when they were combined under the Imperial power of Chandragupta Maurya, Seleucus failed to score a victory over them.

crossed the Ravi. Here he met with very vigorous resistance from the warlike Cathaeans (Katthis) of Sangala. The town of Sangala was sacked and some 17,000 of its defenders were killed in the battle. Alexander's victory over the Cathaeans struck terror in the minds of the neighbouring chiefs and tribal republics, who submitted to him without opposition.¹ One of these rulers who finds a special mention in the Greek records is Sophytes or Saubhuti. He is said to have entertained Alexander royally and later on struck medals with his name written in Greek letters as "Sophytes." Saubhuti is said to have been fond of dogs and the variety of the breeds he had with him particularly impressed the Greeks. Alexander next marched to the banks of the river Bias and heard of the great riches of the empire of Magadha which lay only a few marches distant in the Gangetic plain. He longed to conquer Magadha. But the war-worn Macedonian veterans absolutely refused to march another step. They had been away from their homes for eight long years and had already trudged nearly twelve thousand miles and were weary both of fighting and of victory. And these victories, as Plutarch gives us to understand, were not easy victories. The battles with Porus and the Cathaeans had depressed the spirits of the Macedonians and they began to dread further fighting in India. Moreover, they had heard exaggerated and magnified reports of the military strength and resources of the rulers of the Gangetic valley as well as of the natural difficulties of crossing 'very broad and deep rivers,' and their spirits sank accordingly. So Alexander had to give up his plans of further conquest and with a heavy heart proceeded to make arrangements to return home.

The return march began in the month of July, and the route followed by the Greeks was the same by which they had advanced. On reaching Jhelum, however, preparations for the return journey were made on a larger scale. Alexander was eager to see the ocean and for this purpose he ordered about two thousand boats of all sizes and descriptions to be built. The fleet was ready by the middle of November, and the main portion of the army embarked for the south. Two divisions of the Greek army, one under Hephaestion and the other under Kratos, were ordered to march down either bank. A third division under Philip followed as a rearguard.

*Return March
July 326 B.C.*

Up to the junction of the rivers Jhelum and Chenab, the

¹Cathaeans are said to have enjoyed the highest reputation for beauty, courage and skill in the art of war. According to Strabo, only the handsome and physically fit children were allowed to grow into men. The state had set up a committee to examine every child two months after its birth to determine whether it came up to the standard of beauty and physical fitness prescribed by law and whether it deserved to live or not.

passage of the army was devoid of incident but farther south, the warlike tribes, called the Malloi and Oxydrakai by the Greeks, living on the lower course of the Ravi combined to offer resistance. *War with the tribes on lower Ravi* It appears from Greek accounts that the victor of Porus had no easy time in this region. Though the tribal combination was, in the end, broken and the tribes were defeated singly and their towns and strongholds stormed, yet the opposition they offered was so stubborn that, on several occasions, Alexander's presence in person was necessary to encourage and inspire his soldiers.¹ On one of these occasions, when he was leading a storming party, Alexander himself had a very narrow escape. An arrow from the enemy was thrown with such force that it pierced Alexander's steel cuirass and stuck in his ribs. The stroke was so violent that it made him kneel on the ground whereupon another Malloi soldier ran up with drawn scimitar, thinking to despatch him, which he would have done had not two of Alexander's devoted Macedonians interposed.

After Alexander's recovery, the Greek army continued its progress along the river Indus, receiving on its way the homage of various rulers whose territory lay across the Sind valley. At last the Greek army reached Patala, near modern Hyderabad, in the summer of 325 B.C. when Alexander made final preparations for his departure from India. *Alexander's death* Alexander himself marched by the Mulla pass through Gedrosia or southern Baluchistan and Mekran along the northern coast of the Indian ocean and the Persian Gulf, and his admiral Nearchos was ordered to take charge of the fleet and keep in touch with the coast and the land forces. After enduring great privations, the two divisions effected a junction near Ormuz. From there Alexander proceeded towards Persia and then to Babylon where he died of fever in the summer of 323 B.C. at the age of thirty-three.

It was in the summer of 327 B.C. that Alexander had set out for India and exactly two years later in the summer months of 325 B.C. he had reached Patala on his return march homeward. During these two years, as we have seen in the foregoing paragraphs, he marched close under the Himalayan foot-hills (Taxila, Jhelum, Sialkot and Sangala) and fought with the local Rajas and the ruling tribes. He contemplated the conquest of the Gangetic plain, but his army refused to go farther and he returned from Bias, the way he had come and then marched down

¹The number of confederate forces on one occasion is estimated at 80,000 infantry, 10,000 cavalry, and 700 chariots—a formidable force, indeed. But the federating tribes were so jealous of their tribal dignity that they could not, in time, arrive at a decision as to whose representative should lead the confederate forces, and Alexander with his usual promptitude launched his attack before they could combine.

the Indus and left this country for good. He did not get into the heart of Aryavarta. It was only a part of the Panjab and of the Indus valley that the Greeks had traversed. This is, probably, an explanation of the fact that Alexander is not mentioned in the contemporary Indian literature of the country.

It would appear that Alexander himself intended to make his conquests in Gandhara, the Panjab and Sind permanent and effective. It was for this reason that he divided his Indian dominions into three provinces, namely (1) the Gandhara region under Philip, (2) the Sind region under Pithon and (3) the Panjab division from Jhelum to Bias under his Indian vassal, Porus. Besides the contingents of troops placed at the service of these governors, adequate Greek garrisons were stationed in the towns and cities founded by Alexander at strategic points. But all these arrangements vanished with his sudden and premature death. His officers were ousted, his garrisons destroyed and all traces of the short-lived Greek rule disappeared from the land within two years of Alexander's death.

Alexander's return journey from Sind to Persia through Gedrosia (Mekran) may be said to have opened up an alternative land route with Europe to the one which passed through the Khyber Pass. Again, the navigation of the Persian Gulf along its coast by Nearchos gave Alexander a third line of communication with India, which, if he had lived, would have been helpful to him in retaining his hold on Sind and the Panjab. These routes, later on, strengthened the commercial relations of India with the western countries.

The Greeks were a very cultured people and the Indians of that age, too, claimed a rich heritage of literature and philosophy. The contact between these two highly civilized nations might have been expected to bring about an exchange of ideas, but, unfortunately, the circumstances under which they met precluded any such possibility. In the first place, their contact was of a very short duration and, secondly, battle-fields and camping grounds are the least suitable places for an interchange of scientific ideas. Even in the domain of warfare and military strategy, in which the Macedonian invaders far excelled the Asiatics, the Indian rulers and their military captains seem to have derived little or no benefit from this contact. They stuck to their traditional methods of fighting and continued for centuries to place their chief reliance on their elephant brigades. One direct and immediate result, however, of Alexander's expedition was that the number of small warring kingdoms and tribes which abounded in the Panjab and Sind were so seriously crippled that it became easy for the Mauryan ruler to absorb them in his expanding empire. Soon after this invasion both the Panjab and Sind began to enjoy the blessings of a unified rule, and became strong as integral portions of the empire of Magadha, so much so that

twenty years later when Seleucus crossed the Indus with his Greek legions he found the Panjab much too strong for him.

The indirect results of Alexander's invasion were, indeed, varied and important. The Greek kingdoms in Syria, Bactria and other parts of Asia, which had been established on the disruption of Alexander's empire, produced, in course of time, close cultural contact between India and Europe. It was this contact with the Hellenistic States of Asia that was responsible for the rise of the Gandhara School of Sculpture. Again, the system of Indian astronomy is believed to have been largely influenced by the Hellenic system during this period of contact. Some scholars go so far as to suggest that it was Alexander's easy victory over the divided Panjab and the fear of a repetition of a similar foreign invasion that had, in fact, persuaded Chandragupta Maurya and his minister Chanakya to bring the whole of Northern India under one rule. Be that as it may, the political lessons of Alexander's invasion could not be altogether lost upon his contemporaries and it is not wrong to say that, indirectly, it paved the way for the Empire of the Mauryas.

To a student of ancient Indian history, perhaps, the most important thing about Alexander's invasion is the fulsome narrative given in classical literature which throws sidelights on the contemporary history of our country. Alexander brought with him many Greeks of eminence in the world of science and letters who wrote books describing their experiences in India. These original works are, no doubt, lost, but quotations taken from them by later writers are available today. The names of Ambhi and Porus which do not occur in Indian literature are preserved by the Greek historians.

NOTES

(a) The political history as gathered from the Jain and Buddhist sacred books reveals that the whole of Northern India was divided into 16 small and big monarchies and a number of small tribal republics. During the course of the following two centuries all these were gradually absorbed into one imperial power set up in Magadha, first by the Bimbisara dynasty and then by the Nanda dynasty. The most important ruler of the former dynasty was Ajatashatru and that of the latter dynasty Mahapadma Nanda. It was the Nanda ruler whom Alexander wanted to attack; and it was the last of this line whom Chandragupta Maurya had eventually overthrown. The military strength of the Magadha empire, as estimated by the Greeks, amounted to 200,000 infantry, 20,000 cavalry, 2,000 war chariots and 3,000 war elephants.

(b) **Social and Economic Conditions.** The Buddhist books, especially the Jataka stories, are replete with tales and legends which give a vivid description of the social and economic life of the people of India during the period under review. A special feature worthy of notice concerning the social organization is that the caste system was becoming more rigid in some respects whereas in others it was losing its essential character.

Some of the Kshatriyas had taken to the profession of the Vaishyas viz., of tilling land and some of the Brahmins indulged in trade and manual work and yet remained members of their respective castes—a phenomenon which is so visible in the Hindu society of today. Again, the towns though few in those days, had all the conveniences of modern life except those which are the results of modern scientific inventions. The traders and business-men had their own panchayats or guilds which settled their disputes. The life in a village was plain and simple, but, perhaps, was better organized on co-operative basis than it is today. Roads and communications were neither so elaborate nor so secure as they are today. Nor was the governmental organization of a uniform type as we have in modern India.

(c) When the rulers of Magadha were extending their dominions in India, the kings of Persia were also building up their power. Ultimately Darius I despatched his forces towards India 517-16 B.C. and annexed the country up to the river Jhelum. The annual revenue which the Panjab used to pay to Persia is estimated at Rs. one crore and fifty lakhs. The Persian governors and district officers were stationed in the Panjab and the Panjabis were also recruited in the Persian army and fought under the banner of Persia in Europe (Greece). How long the Persian rule endured in the Panjab we cannot say; but it seems to have continued for a fairly long time since the people of the Panjab imbibed a good deal of Persian culture and civilization. (For details—See P. 71-72 of the text).

(d) **Alexander's Invasion.** Alexander originally came to Asia with the intention of subduing the Persian empire. Having done this, he thought of reducing Gandhara and the Panjab which formed the provinces of this empire. The ruler of Taxila, who was, in a way, the gate-keeper of India, readily yielded and became an ally of the Macedonian invader. But the ruler of the adjoining kingdom (Porus) was determined to resist the advance of the foreign army. Porus was defeated after a hard-fought battle, but Alexander combining policy with generosity, conciliated his noble foe by restoring him his kingdom. Alexander then advanced eastwards with the intention of attacking Magadha but the war-worn Macedonian army refused to go farther than river Bias. Alexander was thus forced to quit India without achieving much. During his return march he had to fight several battles, the most noteworthy being that with the Mallois in which Alexander had a narrow escape.

(e) **Effects of his Invasion.** The effects of Alexander's invasion in India were of no permanent or abiding nature. His invasion came like a blast and vanished. No contemporary writer seems to have taken notice of it and there is no mention of Alexander in the Indian literature of the age. The stay of the Greeks in the country was so short that it could not possibly have produced any important results. (For fuller details—See P. 78-80 of the text).

QUESTIONS

1. Account for the rise of the Imperial power of Magadha during 600—300. B.C.
2. Write notes on: Bimbisara, Ajatashatru and Mahapadma Nanda.
3. What cultural or artistic evidence is there to show that the Panjab and Gandhara once formed provinces of the Persian empire? How was this political contact brought about?

4. Draw a map to illustrate Alexander's campaign in India. Mention some of the more important battles which the Macedonians fought during this campaign.
5. Describe the political condition of India and of the Panjab in particular, on the eve of Alexander's invasion.
6. Write a critical note on the effects of Alexander's invasion of India.
7. Give a brief survey of the social and economic conditions in India during 600—300 B.C. Do you find any points of resemblance between the social and economic organization of then and now?

"Note".

I read this book
very carefully and found
it very useful.
Therefore every
student of this college
should read it
carefully.
In my opinion
this book is
most interesting
go into it
to our
classroom
book
1800

CHAPTER VI

The Mauryan Empire 321—184 B.C.

SECTION I. CHANDRAGUPTA AND BINDUSARA

The rise of the Maurya dynasty ushers in a new era in the political history of India. It was for the first time that the greater part of the country came under one king and a system of uniform administration was established throughout the extensive empire of the Mauryas. The growth of the great imperial power under Chandragupta and his successors had also brought in its train the cultural and political unity of the country. Under Asoka, the third and the greatest ruler of this dynasty, Buddhism received a tremendous fillip which subsequently helped it to become a world-wide religious movement. Under the patronage of the Maurya emperors, India witnessed a remarkable growth in art and literature.

Importance of the Mauryan period

Again, the identification of Chandragupta with Sandrokottos, mentioned by the Greeks as the contemporary of Seleucus Nikator and the synchronization of Asoka with Antiochos Theos of Syria places the chronology of Indian history on a definite footing. Henceforward we can assign dates to various events with reasonable accuracy or even with precision.

The sources of Mauryan history are many and varied. We have abundant material embodied in the writings of classical authors such as Megasthenes, Arrian, Curtius, Plutarch and Justin as well as in those of ancient Indian writers like Kautilya and Visakhadatta.

Sources of Mauryan History

The inscriptions of Asoka form, perhaps, the most valuable of the internal sources of the history of the period. The information contained in the emperor's edicts is supplemented by the traditional accounts preserved in the Jain and the Buddhist canonical literature. An historian of the Mauryan age, therefore, is particularly fortunate in possessing this diverse material. He has the advantage of having in his possession two vivid pictures drawn by two different sets of artists—the Indian and the foreigner—and is thus able to draw another and perhaps a more accurate one after a close study of the two.

The early career of Chandragupta seems to have been lost in

tradition.¹ However, the accounts preserved in Greek and Indian legends would lead one to infer that at a comparatively early age Chandragupta rose high in military service under the last Nanda ruler of Magadha. At one time, while yet in service, he incurred the displeasure of his master and ultimately had to leave his dominions. It was during his exile that Chandragupta is said to have paid a visit to Alexander's camp at Taxila with the intention of inducing the Macedonian invader to advance upon Magadha. Alexander, we are told, was annoyed by the boldness of Chandragupta's speech and gave orders to kill the intrepid youth.² The young Mauryan lad managed to escape as he was destined by Providence for a greater task.

As soon as the news of Alexander's death reached India, Chandragupta reappeared on the scene and set himself the task of freeing his country from the Macedonian yoke. He gathered round him a number of warlike clans of the Panjab, attacked the Greek garrisons, overcame them and made himself master of the whole province. Emboldened by his success in the Panjab, he marched eastwards into Magadha and attacked the Nanda ruler. The latter was already unpopular with his subjects owing to his misdeeds,³ and a little effort on the part of Chandragupta and his allies set the whole machinery of intrigue in motion and brought about the downfall of the Nanda family without striking a blow. Subsequent events are not quite clear, but there is a suggestion in the *Mudrarak-*

Conquest of the Panjab & overthrow of the Nanda Power 322—21 B.C.
 1It seems strange, indeed, that we should have little or no definite information regarding the parentage of Chandragupta. According to the Purāṇas he was the son of a Nanda king of Magadha by a lowborn woman named Mura, from whom the dynastic name Maurya is supposed to have been derived. The author of the *Mudrarakshasa* also represents him as a Sudra. The Jain tradition explains the family name of Maurya by representing that Chandragupta was the son of a daughter of the king's *mayur-poshaka* or the keeper of the peacocks. The Buddhist books, however, give a different account and seem to supply sufficient evidence to indicate that the founder of the Maurya house belonged to a Kshatriya tribe of the Moriyas. The Moriyas were indeed the ruling clan in the small republic of Pipphalivana in the sixth century B.C. and it is probable that in course of time they were absorbed into the expanding kingdom of Magadha. See R. C. Chaudhari's *Political History of Ancient India* and *Cambridge History of India* Vol. I P. 470.

2The meeting of Chandragupta with Alexander is mentioned both by Plutarch and Justin. Plutarch further adds that Chandragupta was only a young lad at the time.

3The Nanda rulers were looked upon as usurpers and men of low breed. The huge army they had raised and the fabulous wealth which they had extorted from the people had made them very unpopular. The princes and people of small States which the Nandas had absorbed into their empire of Magadha must have been nursing revenge against them.

shasa,¹ that Chandragupta was not fair to his allies. With the help of his unscrupulous minister Chanakya, he contrived to get the allies removed from his way and seized the throne of Magadha. We may roughly date the accession of Chandragupta at about 321 B.C.

It is not possible, with our present knowledge, to trace the gradual steps by which Chandragupta brought into being a mighty empire. As king of Magadha he succeeded, indeed, to a predominant position in Hindustan and had the vast military resources of this kingdom at his disposal. These were, probably, augmented by his own troops which he had raised in the Panjab. He was thus enabled to subdue, one after another, all the States of Northern India, till his empire included the whole of the country with its southern boundary running along the line of the Narbada in the south, with the Bay of Bengal in the east and the Arabian Sea in the west.

*Chandragupta's
subsequent
conquests*

Besides his conquests in Northern India, Chandragupta is credited even with a successful invasion of the Tamil country. According to Mamulanar, an ancient Tamil poet, the Mauryas advanced as far south as the Podiyil Hill in the Tinnevely district. They are said to have entered Southern India by the Konkan route along the western coast and not from Pataliputra along the eastern coast. The choice of Chandragupta's route may have been due to a wish to avoid conflict with the powerful kingdom of Kalinga which was subsequently conquered by his grandson, Asoka.

How well Chandragupta utilised his great resources in consolidating his power was seen when he was called upon to defend the country against the Greek invasion, under Seleucus Nikator. Seleucus was one of the ablest of the Asiatic Greeks. During the wars that followed the death of Alexander, for the partition of his empire between his generals, Seleucus overcame all the rest and got the major portion of the eastern dominions, comprising Syria, Persia and Central Asia. The Indus formed the eastern limit of his dominions, but not satisfied with this, Seleucus crossed that river with a large army and attempted to conquer the Panjab as Alexander had done. But he was soon disillusioned. The Panjab was no longer a congerie of small warring States as Alexander had found it. It was now an integral part of an all-India empire whose destinies were controlled by a

*The Seleucidan
War circa
305 B.C.*

¹It is an historical play composed by Visakhadatta sometime about the seventh century A.D. Some writers believe that the play is based on ancient court tradition. According to the story given in the play, Chandragupta organised a confederacy of the chiefs of the Panjab, in which his principal ally was one Parvataka, the ruler of a mountainous tract (probably Porus or his son). It was with the aid of Parvataka and Chanakya that he eventually succeeded in seizing the throne of Magadha.

great military leader. Chandragupta was well acquainted with the military tactics of the Greeks and had also the partial advantage of fighting in his own country. Classical writers are silent about the details of the conflict, but the results of the war which were formulated in a treaty, leave little room for doubt that the invader was worsted in the struggle. Seleucus ceded in perpetuity the rich satrapies of Aria, Arachosia, Gedrosia and the Parapanisadae, i.e., Herat, Kandahar, Mekran and Kabul which extended the boundaries of Chandragupta's empire to the Hindu Kush range and thus gave it 'a splendid natural frontier.'

Chandragupta is said to have made a present of 500 elephants to Seleucus on this occasion, and 'a matrimonial alliance was also arranged, which may be interpreted as meaning that a daughter of Seleucus was married to Chandragupta.'¹

The political and diplomatic relations between Syria and India were further strengthened when Seleucus, in or about the year 302, B.C. sent his envoy named Megasthenes to reside at the court of Pataliputra. Megasthenes had already served in a diplomatic capacity at the court of Sibyrtios, the satrap of Arachosia (Kandahar) and was thus familiar with Indian courts. He stayed in Pataliputra for about five years (302—298 B.C.) and compiled an account of India, its geography, social life and political institutions. But, unfortunately, his work 'The Indica' has been lost. Parts of it only have come down to us in the shape of frequent quotations by later writers such as Strabo, Arrian, Plutarch and Pliny who had availed of this book while compiling their account of India.²

In many places Megasthenes confused folklore with historical facts and inserted, in his book, incredible stories which he heard from people. But there is no reason to doubt the general accuracy of Megasthenes on matters which came under his personal observation or for which he could readily have secured trustworthy informants. His work, on the whole, is of great historical value; both as a direct source of information, and as providing an important test of the reliability of Indian accounts such as we have in Arthashastra and other books.

At the close of his reign, the empire of Chandragupta included the countries what are now called Afghanistan, the Panjab, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh; Bihar and Bengal in the far east; and the peninsula of Gujarat-Kathiawar in the west. Chandragupta's authority was supreme in the whole of India north of the Narbada. Whether he exercised similar supreme autho-

*Extent of
Chandragupta's
Empire*

¹Oxford History of India by V. Smith P. 74.

²These fragments have been collected by Schwanbeck and translated into English by McCrindle.

rity over his trans-Vindhyan conquests is not certain, as his successor, Bindusara, we are given to understand, was engaged in serious conflict with 'the kings and nobles of the territory between the eastern and western seas.'

Chanakya or Vishnugupta or Kautilya as he is variously known, is believed to have been the principal adviser and chief minister of Chandragupta whom he served with great devotion and fidelity. "There are good reasons to believe," says Dr. Majumdar, "that the splendid success of Chandragupta was due, as much to the statesmanship of the clever prime minister as to his own military genius." Kautilya was, indeed, a past-master in the art of government and diplomacy and his celebrated work, the *Arthashastra* amply testifies to his ability as a practical statesman. Kautilya's book is about the oldest work on the art and science of government which has come down to us. It treats of various subjects: education of princes; the daily duties of kings; the selection of ministers as well as the means of testing their loyalty and integrity; various departments of government and their organization and working; the mode of levying and collecting taxes; and the mode of administering justice. The major portion of Kautilya's book is devoted to the discussion and exposition of the relations which a king should maintain with his neighbouring rulers. 'A neighbour-ruler should ever be considered as an enemy, but friendship and alliance must be cultivated with the neighbour's neighbour' advocates Kautilya. Akbar the great Mughal emperor, also advocated a policy of open aggressive warfare. "A monarch," he said, "should be ever intent on conquest, otherwise his neighbours rise in arms against him." Kautilya urges that so far as possible, a king should avoid actual warfare and use other means of weakening his enemy, by sowing seeds of dissension in his camp, by employing spies and hired assassins, by use of poison and women. A king, in other words, might have recourse to all means fair and foul, for encompassing his ends.¹ This open,

*Kautilya
and his
Arthashastra*

¹Kautilya bases his book on earlier treatises on the same subject and makes an acknowledgment of this fact. His book remained unnoticed for a long time until a manuscript copy of it was discovered in the Mysore library by Dr. Shamshastri in 1909, and was subsequently edited and published by him. Since then, the book has become so popular that many a scholar, Indian and European, have published it with their notes and commentaries. Some scholars like Keith, Winternitz, and Jolly hold the view that the actual author of the book was not the prime minister of Chandragupta and that the book was compiled some three to four hundred years later than the reign of the Mauryan emperor.

The traditional account brings Chanakya in close association with Chandragupta under peculiar circumstances. He is represented as a renowned scholar. But nature, it seems was very niggardly in giving him physical appearance. He was ugly and deformed in body with legs bent and crooked. He was once invited to the assembly Hall in Pataliputra along with other

unblushing advocacy of cunning, deceit, and duplicity as means for carrying out one's aim is a glaring dark spot on the otherwise fair picture of social and political life of the age.

Chandragupta had a well-trained and efficient standing army which is reckoned at the high figure of 6,00,000 foot soldiers, 30,000 cavalry and 9,000 war elephants besides chariots, the transport corps, and the fleet.

The Mauryan Army

The war chariots were drawn by stout oxen, and each carried two soldiers and a driver. The war elephants were specially trained for the purpose and carried three archers each besides the *mahout*. The principal equipment of the soldiers comprised swords, lances, bows, arrows, javelins and bucklers. From Greek accounts, it appears that the Mauryan army was specially strong in its cavalry and its corps of war elephants, on which it depended for victory in battle. Defensive armour was supplied to men, elephants and horses. The author of the *Arthashastra* informs us that there were elaborate rules for the training and drilling of soldiers; and that special attention was paid to the sick and the wounded in the army. "Surgeons carrying in their hands surgical instruments, apparatus, medicines, healing oils and bandages, and nurses with prepared foods and beverages should always be in attendance and encourage the soldiers" says Kautilya.

To manage the affairs of the army, there was a war office divided into six boards consisting of five members each, and each had a department to look after, *viz.*, (i) infantry, (ii) cavalry, (iii) chariots, (iv) elephants, (v) ships,¹ and (vi) transport.

Chandragupta was not only a great soldier and conqueror, but also a great administrator. A study of the *Arthashastra* together with the account left by Megasthenes would enable us to form a fairly accurate idea of the administration of the vast empire which he had built up.

Civil

Administration

The emperor was the supreme head of the government. He was assisted in the discharge of his kingly duties by a small body of ministers called the *Mantrin* or High Ministers. They were selected from among the general body of government officials called the *Amatyas*, for 'their devotion, trustworthiness and approved service,' and were given the highest salary, i.e., 48,000 panas per

The Emperor and his Ministers

earned scholars, but when the king (Nanda) saw an ugly looking man occupying a seat in the front row, he ordered his expulsion from the Hall. Chanakya was furious with rage and vowed the destruction of the house of Nanda. This is why he allied himself with Chandragupta.

¹This department was charged with the duty of providing and maintaining harbours and ferries and regulating all water traffic. That a good deal of sea-borne trade was carried during the Mauryan period is testified from the *Arthashastra*. Kautilya mentions seagoing vessels, both for coastal traffic and for longer voyages to Burma and China. Tamralipti was a flourishing port at the mouth of the Ganges.

annum. In addition to the *Mantrins*, there was another and a larger body of councillors called the *Mantri-parishad*, a sort of assembly of imperial councillors. The salary of the members of the *Parishad* was 12,000 panas per annum, which shows that this body evidently occupied a position inferior to that of the *Mantrins*. This body was only an advisory body and was summoned for consultation, along with the high ministers when matters of public policy and urgency had to be transacted. The members of the *Mantri-parishad* also attended the king on ceremonial occasions. This body was recruited from all kinds of *Amatyas* or high and low officials of the State whose opinion was considered of some value on matters of public importance.

Besides these two bodies of ministers and councillors, there was yet another grade of State officers called by the general name of the *Amatyas*. These men were, probably specially trained for administrative services; and *Civil Service* all higher appointments in the executive, judicial and diplomatic departments were filled by the members of this class.¹

In order to keep watch over the conduct of the officers of the government, the State employed a large number of secret service men, called the *Gudha Purushas* by Kautilya and 'overseers and inspectors' by Megasthenes. *Espionage* Kautilya seems to have implicitly believed in the proverb that 'spies are the eyes of kings.' He certainly attaches great importance to the institution of spies and news-writers and insists that able and trustworthy persons alone should be employed for this work. We have the testimony of Megasthenes and Strabo that Chandragupta's spies were men of approved honesty and ability. The latter writes "They (Inspectors) are entrusted with the superintendence of all that is going on, and it is their duty to report privately to the king.... The best and most faithful persons are appointed to the office of Inspectors."² Kautilya also recommends the employment of 'women of easy virtue' as spies and Strabo, from whom we have quoted above, seems to confirm the fact that women or courtesans were employed by the 'City Inspectors as their coadjutors.'³

The vast empire of the Mauryas was divided into a number of

¹This class may be said to have corresponded to the Civil Service of the present day Indian administration, or the Mughal Mansabdars of the 16th century.

²Hamilton and Falcon's translation of Strabo quoted by H. C. Chaudhuri Pol. History of Ancient India, p. 181, University of Calcutta, 1927.

³Kautilya recommends recruitment of spies from men and women of all classes, trades and professions—like fortune-tellers, palmists and astrologers; Sadhus and ascetics with shaven heads and braided hair; goldsmiths, silver-smiths and other artisans; milkmen, milkmaids, pedlars and even regular shopkeepers, as well as dancers and actors of both sexes. If the whole scheme of Kautilya was actually put into practice it would surely make the life of an average citizen most miserable.

provinces. The exact number of provinces in Chandragupta's time is unknown. In the time of his grandson, Asoka, five provinces are mentioned, *viz.*, the Northern Province with its capital at Taxila, the Western Province with its capital at Ujjain, the Southern Province with its capital at a place called Suvarnagiri, the Kalinga Province with its capital at Tosali and the Home or the Central Provinces with their capital at Pataliputra. The outlying provinces were ruled by viceroys who were selected, generally, from among the princes of the blood royal and were styled *Kumaras*.

Provincial Governments

A vast and varied empire like that of Chandragupta must have included, besides the imperial provinces, a number of conquered States left more or less autonomous on a feudatory basis. The term Sangha, applied by Kautilya to Surashtra, Kamboja, and to several clans in the Panjab, probably, corresponds to these self-governing States. Arrian also refers to cities and clans which enjoyed a democratic government.

Feudatory States

The subordinate work of administration, in cities and district towns, was placed under the charge of officers called Nagar-*District and Municipal Administration* adhyakhshas or Superintendents of cities. This officer, like the modern district officer, appears to have been a man of all jobs, and was expected to supervise the work of all departments: irrigation, agriculture, education, public works, forests, mines, famine relief, etc. The charge of military affairs in cities and districts was entrusted to another body of officials called the Batadyakhshas.

In the discharge of their duties, the civil and military superintendents were each assisted by six boards each composed of five members. These boards were organised on lines similar to those in the capital city of Pataliputra and were entrusted with similar duties of municipal administration.

According to Megasthenes, the imperial city of Pataliputra was in shape a parallelogram, nine miles long and one and a half miles broad; and was situated at the confluence of the Son and the Ganges rivers. It was surrounded with a ditch 606 feet in breadth and 30 cubic feet in depth; and the wooden wall of the city had 570 towers and 64 gates and was pierced with loopholes for discharge of arrows.

Pataliputra

The king's palace was situated in the heart of the city and was chiefly constructed of timber.¹ According to Megasthenes, the palace buildings of Pataliputra far excelled those of the Persian

¹Recent excavations show that much of the area then occupied by the city of Pataliputra is now covered by Patna, Bankipura and sundry other villages. The actual site of the palace is believed to have been very close to the village of Kumrahar.

rulers of Susa and Ekbatana in splendour, richness of style and decorative designs. The wooden pillars of the palace halls were plated with gold and were ornamented with designs of birds and foliage in gold and silver, and the furniture of the palace included, among other articles, "magnificent thrones and chairs of State and great vessels of gold, silver and copper set with precious stones."

The Municipal administration of Pataliputra which presumably served as model for other big towns, is also described by Megasthenes. The city, he says, was administered by a body of thirty commissioners who had formed themselves into six committees of five each. The first committee controlled the industries and handicrafts of the city. The second was in charge of arrangements of visitors and foreigners who came to the city on business. The third committee was charged with registration of births and deaths. A record of these and other statistics was, probably, considered necessary by the Government for their schemes of taxation and other purposes. The fourth committee regulated the sales of produce, weights and measures, and issued licences to merchants. The fifth committee performed similar duties in regard to manufactured goods and saw that old things were not sold for new ones. The sixth and the last was charged with the duty of collecting tithes on all goods sold in the city.

Municipal Administration

This type of administrative organization both at the centre and in towns and districts was based on the principle accepted by ancient Hindu writers on the Nitishastra that Government is possible only with assistance. "A single wheel," remarks Kautilya, "can never move."

"The perfection of the arrangements," observes Dr. Vincent Smith, "thus indicated, is astonishing even when exhibited in outline." And a perusal of the departmental details, as given in Kautilya's Arthashastra further increases our wonder that such an organization could have been planned and efficiently operated in India in 300 B.C. Akbar had nothing like it, and it may be doubted if any of the ancient Greek cities were better organised.

The village communities, probably, continued their existence as autonomous bodies. Their administrative and judicial business was carried on by the village headman assisted by the village elders, none of whom was a salaried official of the government. The central government maintained their administrative link with these self-governing communities by means of officers called the Gopas and the Sthanikas, the former entrusted with a charge of five to ten villages and the latter with 'a quarter of a district.' A Gopa was expected to know the name, the caste, the occu-

Village Officers and their duties

pation and the sources of income of all men or householders living in his jurisdiction. He was expected, in a way, to maintain a sort of Domes Day Book of his official charge.

The land tax formed then, as now, the chief item of revenue. According to Greek historians one-fourth of the produce was demanded by the government as their share. *Revenues of the State* The State bestowed great care on agriculture and had instituted a regular department which looked after irrigation works and regulated the supply of water to the fields where irrigation depended on canals. In fact the construction and maintenance of canals and reservoirs had been from very early times, regarded as the duty of the State. The minor irrigation works were provided and maintained by the village communities whereas the bigger canals, and reservoirs and lakes were constructed and looked after by the State. The famous *Sudarshan* lake at Girnar was constructed in Chandragupta's time under the supervision of the provincial governor Pushya Gupta. The cultivating classes appear to have received special protection from the State during the times of war and this fact was noticed by Megasthenes. He writes, "among Indians, husbandmen are regarded as a class that is sacred; the tillers of the soil, even when battle is raging close by, are in no danger, for although the combatants on either side kill each other they do not hurt the cultivators. And they do not ravage an enemy's land with fire, nor cut down the trees."

Besides the tax on land, the State received a considerable income from taxes on commerce, tolls and ferry dues. All commercial sales in cities, as already mentioned, were strictly regulated by State officials and were subjected to a 10 per cent. *ad valorem* duty—evasion being punished with death. The income from leasing of mines and pearl fisheries as well as from forests, fines, excise duties, etc., constituted other sources of State revenue. The system of maintaining a register of births and deaths suggests the practice of levying some sort of poll-tax.

Among the various departments of government, there was one called the road department which kept the roads in order, looked after the repairs of rest houses for travellers and *Public Works* also provided for the construction of bridges over rivers. The *Arthashastra* mentions the construction of roads as one of the duties of a king. Rules were laid down concerning the correct width of each class of roads. Again, as in modern days, there were set up, on public roads, mile-stones "at every ten stadia (2,000 yards) to show the by-roads and distances."¹

¹The rules regarding the classification of roads, and the making and dimensions of each class reveal a fairly advanced state of civilization. Ordinary cattle-tracks and paths used by the pedestrians ranged from four to six feet in width: the roads for the use of chariots and other wheeled traffic were paved with stones or planks of palm-trees and were as much as thirty-two feet wide and some of the trunk roads were even twice that width.

There was a grand trunk road called the Royal Road which was more than a thousand miles in length and connected the capital Pataliputra with Taxila and the north-west frontier. Another long road and one of great commercial importance ran through Kasi and Ujjain and linked the capital with the great seaports of western India. These ports, it may be mentioned in passing, had kept up trade relations with Egypt and Babylon from very ancient times. Commercial voyages were also undertaken by Indian merchants along the eastern coast and a good road was constructed for purposes of inland commerce which connected the port of Tamralipti (at the mouth of the Ganges) with Pataliputra. Besides their great strategic value, these great land routes considerably helped the growth of trade and commerce and the principal cities like Taxila, Ujjain, Kausambi, Kasi and Pataliputra, where different routes met, became great centres of trade both home and foreign. The very fact that the State made definite provision in big cities for the care and comfort of foreigners, shows that quite a number of them must have been in the habit of visiting these places in connection with their commercial transactions.

*Roads and
Trade Routes*

Greek accounts show that the criminal code of the Mauryas was rather severe. It prescribed the penalty of death and mutilation for even ordinary offences like giving false evidence, evasion of government taxes and causing serious hurt to artisans and workmen.

*Justice and
Crime*

Injury to a sacred tree was also sometimes punished with death.

Megasthenes' observations reveal a high standard of social and personal morality among the Indians of his times. He tells us that they were truthful and brave. They were seldom or never convicted of lying. Every one trusted every one else and in their transactions and contracts, witnesses and seals were unnecessary. They acted on a basis of mutual trust and seldom had recourse to a court of law. Thefts were rare and the people did not put locks on their doors.

The People

Physically, Indians are described as a tall people, lightly built, long-lived, and singularly free from disease because of their simplicity in diet and their abstinence from wine.¹ But to their dress and general appearance, the Hindus of that age seem to have attached special importance. "In contrast to the general simplicity of their style," writes Megasthenes, "they love finery and ornament. Their robes are worked in gold, and ornamented with precious stones, and they wear also flowered

¹The Arthashastra seems to show that the gambling dens and the sale and use of liquor were properly regulated by State authorities. Neither gambling nor use of wine was permitted in the villages, although in towns a limited number of shops were run for this business by people on obtaining government licences.

garments made of finest muslin. Attendants walking behind hold umbrellas over them: for they have a high regard for beauty, and avail themselves of every device to improve their looks."¹

Chandragupta died or abdicated the throne after an eventful reign of twenty-four years (321-298 B.C.).² He is the first his-

*Estimate of
Chandragupta*

torical founder of a great Indian empire whose 'banner wafted across the vast stretch of land, from Herat in the north-west, to Madura in the south.' How rapidly he established his rule over this extensive region and how peacefully his throne passed to the succeeding generations bears ample testimony to Chandragupta's administrative and military talents. The Greek accounts describe him as a strong and vigorous ruler. Considering the fact that Chandragupta had no legal claim to the throne of Magadha it became essential that he maintained a strict and vigorous hold on all branches of administration. Like all successful rulers of history Chandragupta's daily life was minutely regulated.³ He had set apart time for attending personally to various duties connected with his government. Referring to Chandragupta's court of justice, Strabo remarks, "he remains there all day thus occupied, not suffering himself to be interrupted even though the time arrives for attending to his person" Kautilya similarly observes, "when in the court, the king shall never cause his petitioners to wait at the door, for when a king makes himself inaccessible to his people and entrusts his work to his immediate officers, he may be sure to engender confusion in business, and to cause thereby public disaffection, and himself a prey to his enemies. All urgent calls he shall hear at once."

Of the reign of Bindusara, who succeeded his father Chandragupta only a few facts are known. The Greek writers call him

Bindusara
298—273 B.C.

by the name of Amitrachates which reads more like a title than a name, and is rendered as Amitraghata (slayer of foes) in Sanskrit.

The traditional accounts also show that during the early

¹McCrindle. The *Indica* of Megasthenes. In this connection see also footnote page 86.

²According to Jain tradition Chandragupta professed the Jain religion and on the occasion of a great famine he abdicated the throne in favour of his son and went himself to Mysore where he died. At the time of his death in 297 B.C. Chandragupta could not have been much past middle age since he is described as a young lad at the time of his interview with Alexander in 326 B.C.

³The King's duties and daily routine of work are clearly defined in the *Arthashastra*. According to the time-table given therein the King began State business with consideration of finance and national defence. Next came the consideration of the petitions of the subjects. Having disposed of these items, the King was expected to attend to his person: washing, bathing and dining. During the second half of the day the King attended to the military matters, official appointments, business of the treasury and reports from the secret agents.

years of his reign, Bindusara was faced with a serious situation. There were troubles in the province of Taxila and also in the trans-Vindhyan territories of the empire.

According to Divyavadana, Bindusara despatched a strong force under prince Asoka to Taxila, and when he arrived near the town, the representatives of the people came out to meet the prince and said, "We are not opposed to the King, nor even to the Prince, but the wicked officers oppress us." Asoka was, probably, thenceforward left in charge of the province. If the Jain tradition is to be believed, the disturbances in the Deccan were of greater magnitude; and peace and order were restored only after a good deal of warfare. It was almost a fresh conquest of the Deccan territory which Bindusara had to make.

In his relations with the Hellenistic princes, Bindusara continued the friendly policy of his father. Antiochos of Syria, the successor of Seleucus, is said to have despatched to the court of Bindusara, a Greek ambassador named Deimachos. Another Greek ruler, named Ptolemy Philadelphos of Egypt, sent an envoy named Dionysios to reside at Pataliputra. Like Megasthenes these two envoys also wrote accounts of India but these are also, unfortunately, lost. A few quotations, however, from Dionysios' account are available in the history of Pliny.

His Foreign Relations

Though we are not in possession of many facts regarding the reign of Bindusara, it seems certain that like his father, he was a strong and wide-awake ruler. He maintained intact the vast empire which he inherited from his father and passed it on to his son and successor, Asoka. He also maintained the dignity and prestige of his government in his relations with other Asiatic powers.

His estimate

SECTION II. ASOKA 273—233 B.C.

Although we know so little about the reign of Bindusara, we have abundant material for the history of his son and successor, Asoka. This material consists of Brahmin, Jain and Buddhist traditions embodied in sacred and secular literature. The Buddhist traditions of Asoka's reign are preserved in two great collections of religious books—those written in Pali, called the Ceylonese tradition, and those written in Sanskrit, preserved in Nepal. The Buddhist monks who compiled these sets of books were, however, so enthusiastic about this friend and patron of their religion that the real history of his reign has suffered considerably from their exaggerated accounts. Similarly, the Brahmin and Jain accounts of Asoka's reign suffer from the misrepresentation of foes.

Sources of Asoka's History

Fortunately, however, there exists another and, without,

doubt, a more reliable source of information which is of very great help to the historian of Asoka in distinguishing fact from fiction. This comprises the inscriptions engraved on rocks and pillars of stone by command of the emperor himself. We shall have occasions to speak more fully about these wonderful inscriptions later in this chapter.

Both the Nepalese and the Ceylonese chronicles agree that a war of succession followed the death of Bindusara, and Asoka succeeded in seizing the throne of Magadha with the help of the minister, Radhagupta. The fact that his formal coronation was delayed for some four years also points to a disputed succession.¹ The Ceylonese tradition further states that Asoka put to death all his male relations, though many scholars are not disposed to believe the story.

Asoka assumed the titles of "Devanampiya and Piyadasi," signifying the favoured of the gods and of pleasing countenance. In his inscriptions also, Asoka refers to himself by these titles alone. The name "Asoka" appears only in one of his edicts recently discovered at Maski, besides the Junagadh inscription of Rudradaman of the second century A.D., and in a still later one of the twelfth century A.D. at Sarnath in which he is called Dharmasoka.

Before his accession to the throne, Asoka had served as governor of two important provinces of the empire viz. Taxila and Ujjain. Both these places were seats of famous Hindu universities where the young governor had opportunities of coming into contact with the best cultured minds. He was thus equipped with the art of governance and was fully initiated into the Mauryan imperial policy before he came to the throne, and the history of the first thirteen years of his reign seems to confirm this view.

Like Chandragupta and Bindusara, Asoka was aggressive at home but pacific abroad. He maintained the traditional practice of his house, namely that of exchanging political embassies with the Greek and other non-Indian States, as also of employing in his service some able and experienced Persian and Greek officials.

Kalinga war
259. B.C.

1Mr. Jayaswal, in an article contributed to the Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society in 1917, has the following explanation for the delay of the coronation ceremony. "It seems that in those days for obtaining royal *abhishheka*, the age of 25 was a condition precedent. This seems to explain why Asoka was not crowned for three or four years after his accession." We cannot, however, depend upon these traditional accounts for the precise age of Asoka. It is possible, as suggested by another writer that the delay was caused by the fact that the mourning for the late king was observed for the maximum period of four years or *Chauvarsi* as prescribed by the orthodox rites.

In India, he carried on the ambitious imperial policy of territorial expansion and in the thirteenth year of his reign he waged an aggressive war on the Kalingas conquered and annexed their kingdom, and rounded off his empire on its south eastern boundary.

The account of the war, as given in Rock Edict XIII, seems to show that the Kalingas were a very powerful people and that they had offered a stout resistance to the imperial invader. "One hundred and fifty thousand persons," runs the Edict, "were carried away captive, one hundred thousand were slain, and many times that number dead."

The victory was gained at a terrible cost of human life. But never, perhaps, did victory end in so strange a result. Instead of feeling happy and joyful over his victory, Asoka's mind was filled with deep remorse by seeing the loss of life caused by the war. He resolved never to wage war again, and turned to the teaching of the Buddha, and henceforward joined that peaceful order as a lay disciple and used the vast resources of his empire for the furtherance of the Dharma. The imperial sword was sheathed for ever and all further expansion of the empire was stopped. Thus, the Kalinga war not only proved a turning point in the life of Asoka but it also brought to a close the era of conquest begun by Chandragupta Maurya.

We read in the R.E. XIII: "directly after the Kalinga had been annexed, began His Sacred Majesty's zealous protection of the Law of Piety, his love of that Law, and his inculcation of that Law." Now that law or Dharma, as Asoka understood it and as his edicts reveal it, is a code of ethics or simple virtues. It contains little or no spiritual dogmas. It prescribes certain duties which a person must observe in his daily life. Amongst the more important ones may be mentioned: obedience to parents and elders, respect to teachers, proper treatment of Brahmins, kindness to servants and the poor, *ahimsa* or non-injury to animals, toleration for the religious beliefs of others; charity, mercy, truthfulness and purity of conduct.

These principles by which the emperor intended to guide the lives of the people, were issued in a series of Edicts and engraved on rocks or on specially prepared pillars, in or about the seventeenth year of his reign. The idea of inscribing these Edicts on stone was, probably, suggested by the Persian custom; and the very close resemblance of these proclamations with those of Darius seems to suggest the same inference.

The Edicts were composed in simple language and were written in the local vernacular, and in scripts known to the people of the locality. Thus we have the two inscriptions found in Mansehra and Shahbazgarhi written in the local script called

Kharoshti, whereas all other inscriptions of Asoka are in the Brahmi alphabet.¹ Another remarkable feature of an Asokan Edict is its freedom from the trammels of a formal style and its perusal leaves an impression on the mind that it was dictated to a stenographer.

The Edicts of Asoka cover a variety of subjects and form an important and trustworthy source of the history of his reign. Besides the exposition of the Law of Piety, which they were primarily designed to give, these documents throw a side light on the system of Asoka's administration. They contain references to the measures which the emperor had adopted to spread the religion of Buddha amongst his people, as well as the principles on which he based his administration. The official designation of some of the officials of the state and the nature of the duties they were expected to perform are also revealed from a number of these inscriptions. The inscriptions also help us in fixing the limits of the Mauryan empire in the time of Asoka. Taken altogether, the Edicts form an autobiography of this noble emperor and reveal to us Asoka as man and as emperor.

Again, the publication of these Edicts leads one to infer that writing was in common use and that the bulk of people in India, during the third century before the Christian era, could read and write. The fact that the language of all these inscriptions is almost the same—showing only small dialectic variations to suit the different provinces—further shows that the spoken language in the whole of Northern India was essentially the same. Besides their value as great historical document of the reign of Asoka, these inscriptions are valuable for a study of the language and alphabet of Northern India in the third century B.C.

The number of the Edicts, so far discovered, is thirty-four. They are classified as:

Classification of the Edicts

- (i) The Minor Rock Edicts inscribed in nine different places, dating probably from 257 B.C.
- (ii) The Bhabra Edict which is definitely Buddhist in tone and was addressed to the monks of Magadha.

(iii) The Fourteen Rock Edicts found in seven recensions and issued in the years 257—256 B.C.

(iv) The Two Kalinga Edicts specially meant for the guidance of the officers appointed to govern the newly conquered province.

(v) The Seven Pillar Edicts found in six places and dated about 243 B.C.

¹The Brahmi Script is the ancient form of the modern characters used in writing Sanskrit and the allied languages of Northern and Western India. The Kharoshti alphabet which are written from right to left (as in Persian language) are probably derived from the Aramaic Script and their use was introduced in Gandhara and the Panjab during the days of the Persian rule and continued as late as the 4th century A.D.

(vi) The Two Pillar Edicts found in the Nepal Terai confirm the Buddhist tradition that Asoka performed the religious tour to the Buddhist holy places.

(vii) The Minor Pillar Edicts relate to the reforms introduced in the government of the Buddhist church.

(viii) The Barabar Caves inscriptions near Gaya reveal the fact that Asoka was tolerant to other sects and liberally donated funds for the help of the Ajivika sect even though this sect had nothing in common with Buddhism.

The inscriptions are very widely distributed and are found in all parts of the country, from Peshawar and Nepal in the north, to Mysore in the south, Dhauli (near Puri) in the east, and Girnar in the west.¹

These inscriptions help us in fixing the limits of the Mauryan empire under Asoka. Those at Kalsi and Lalitapatan prove the inclusion of Dehra Dun, the Terai and the valley of Nepal within the dominions of Asoka. The inclusion of Kashmir within the empire is proved by the testimony of Hiuen Tsang and Kalhana. In the north-west, the empire included Taxila, Peshawar, Shahbazgarhi and Mansehra and according to the evidence supplied by the R. E. XIII, its limits stretched as far as the confines of the realm of the Greek ruler Antiochos Theos, (Anitiyoko Yona raja). In the west, the empire extended to the Arabian Sea and probably embraced the vassal State of Surashtra. The southern limits of the empire extended, as far as modern Mysore, and touched the borders of the Tamil kingdoms which are mentioned in the Edicts as Prachainta or the frontier people. Distinguished from these frontier tribes are a few others which may be taken as vassal tribes, namely the Andhras, the Pulindas, the Bhojas and the Rashtrikas. On the east, Bengal was included in the empire but Kamrupa or Assam, probably, lay outside the Mauryan dominion.

Reference to his contemporaries is another important piece of information contained in the inscriptions of Asoka. The Thirteenth Rock Edict mentions the following of these contemporaries with whom the emperor maintained friendly relations by sending special envoys to their courts: Antiochos Theos, king of Syria (265—246 B.C.); Ptolemy Philadelphos, king of Egypt (285—243 B.C.); Magas, king of Cyrene in North Africa (285—258 B.C.); Antigonos Gonatas, king of Macedonia (278—239 B.C.) and Alexander who ruled over Epirus (272—258 B.C.).

Asoka's foreign contemporaries

More important amongst the places where the inscriptions have been found are: Mansehra and Shahbazgarhi (near Peshawar); Kalsi, near Mussoorie; Girnar (Gujrat Kathiawar); Sopra (Bombay); Dhauli (Orissa); Jaugada (Madras); Bairat (Jaipur); Sahsram (Bengal); Maski, Gavimath and Palkigundu (Hyderabad) and Siddapur (Mysore).

Asoka's Ceylonese contemporary was King Tissa whose accession may be dated somewhere between 251 and 247 B.C.



Light is also thrown on Asoka's system of administration by a reference to some of his Edicts. It appears that the great provinces, as in the days of his predecessors, continued to be ruled by governors, and Tosali, Suvarnagiri, Ujjain and Taxila were each under a prince of the blood royal. Further, Asoka seems to have also continued the council government or Parishad of his predecessors as is proved by several references in the Edicts, particularly the Rock Edicts III and VI. Next to the provincial governors

were a set of officials known as Mahamatras, the Rajukas and the Prodeshikas. A Mahamatra was, most probably, in charge of a district or great city and there were several grades of these officials. The Mahamatras were also appointed for other than purely administrative purposes. A dharma-mahamatra, for instance, was entrusted with the duty of the supervision of the morals of the people living within his jurisdiction; and the ainta-mahamatra had duties similar to those of a Warden of the Marches. As to the Rajukas, the Pillar Edict IV refers to them as officers "set over many hundred thousands of people." They had full discretion to punish or reward, which seems to indicate that they were a class of judicial officers. The Prodeshikas probably came next to the Rajukas in the rank of magisterial and administrative officers; and amongst their most important functions were the collection of taxes and the maintenance of law and order.

Besides these, there are references in the Edicts to other classes of minor officials but it is difficult to ascertain their duties.

After his conversion to Buddhism, the guiding principle of Asoka's administration came to be 'love' and 'friendliness' for all living creatures. In fact, the entire activities of the State were, henceforward, devoted to one end, namely the promotion of Dharma and the welfare of man and beast. It was in pursuance of this principle that measures were adopted to restrict, and later on, to place a ban on, the slaughtering of animals. Asoka tells us himself that hundreds of animals used to be killed daily to make curries for the royal kitchen. Later on the daily allowance of flesh was reduced to two peacocks and a deer, but even this was abolished eventually. He thus set a personal example of self-denial for his subjects to follow.

*Benevolent
Activity of
the Reign*

Again, it was in accordance with the same humanitarian principles that the emperor was led to establish hospitals where free medical aid was provided for animals as well as for human beings. We are further told in the Edicts that medicinal herbs for these hospitals, wheresoever they were lacking, were imported and planted. The public roads throughout the empire were provided with shade and water. "On the roads wells were dug at intervals of eight kos, flights of steps built to descend into the water, and banyan trees and mango groves planted for the enjoyment of man and beast."

Tradition has it that Asoka was converted to Buddhism by Upagupta, the greatest Buddhist saint of the times, and that it was in his company that the emperor went on a pilgrimage to the holy places of Buddhism. The religious tour comprised visits to Lambini Gardens where Gautama Buddha was born; the Bodhi tree at

*Asoka and
Buddhism*

Gaya; the Deer Park near Sarnath where the Lord had delivered his first sermon; and Kusinagar where the Master breathed his last. The royal visit to all or most of these spots was commemorated by the erection of pillars or other monuments.

From a reference to the Minor R. E. I, it appears that for the first two and a half years after his conversion, the emperor did not exert himself much to propagate the new faith but a little later he set himself to the task with all earnestness, zest and enthusiasm. He instituted a new department of the State called the department of Dharma Mahamatras which was charged with the duty of inculcating the Dharma and of convening and organising religious gatherings. The principles of the Law of Piety were inscribed on rocks and on stone pillars throughout the empire so that these could be made widely known to his people. Religious missions were sent to various parts of the empire, to Burma, Ceylon and Nepal, and to the courts of some of his Greek neighbours, to expound and expand the teachings of Buddhism. In the twenty-first year of his reign, according to the Buddhist tradition, Asoka convened at Pataliputra a great assembly of learned monks which deliberated for about nine months to settle disputed points of doctrine and avoid further schism in the church.

The service rendered to Buddhism by Asoka is, indeed, inestimable. His efforts raised the religion of Sakyamuni Gautama from the position of a local sect to that of a world religion equipped with a great and powerful missionary organisation and endowed with rich and prosperous monasteries. The imperial prestige lent to the faith by this noblest of men and sovereigns went a long way towards arresting the progress of schism in the church and enabled it, once again, to resume its missionary work. His reign, therefore, is a very important landmark in the history of the Buddhist Church.

Asoka's character and personality are vividly revealed from the epigraphical records of his reign. He appears, without doubt, a man thoroughly imbued with the love of humanity and philanthropy, a great friend of man and beast, and a noble apostle of peace and morality. Even if some of his acts were calculated to cause offence to his non-Buddhist subjects, we must remember that they were inspired by his passionate regard for the sanctity of life, especially of animal life.

*Asoka's
character and
ideal of
kingly duty*

His conception of kingly duties was noble and his zeal for the discharge of public business equally laudable. He made himself accessible at all hours and was ready to transact business with his officers even in private seclusion. "Now by me this arrangement has been made that at all hours and in all places—whether I am dining, or in the ladies' apartments, in my bedroom, or in my closet, in my carriage or in the palace gardens—

the official reporters must report to me on the people's business, and I am ready to do the people's business in all places. . . . For, the welfare of all folk is what I must work for—and the root of that, again, is in effort and the despatch of business." The Edict further goes on in the same strain. "All men are my children and just as I desire for my children that they may enjoy every kind of prosperity and happiness, in both this world and the next, so also I desire the same for all men."

It was this desire for the welfare of his people that led Asoka to enact moral legislation and undertake measures for the propagation of the same. He believed that the security of life and property of his subjects was not the only public duty he was called upon to perform but he must also look after the moral and spiritual welfare of the people committed to his care. During his reign art and literature received tremendous impetus. The Pali dialect in which the inscriptions of Asoka are couched became almost the universal language of India. It may not be possible to estimate with confidence the results of Asoka's efforts in various directions but it cannot be denied that he endeavoured to set before his people a high ideal of righteousness, and that 'no figure in ancient India is more familiar to us and none leaves a more abiding impression of a towering personality than this great Mauryan Emperor.'

His place in history

One of the cardinal points emphasised by Asoka in his Law of Piety is the principle of religious toleration. Some of the dedications and votive inscriptions of his reign also seem to confirm the view that even in actual practice he often maintained that tolerant attitude of mind towards other religions. But we cannot ignore the fact that some of his orders, like the one prohibiting the slaughter of animals even for sacrificial purposes, must have caused annoyance to the orthodox Hindus; the more so as they had already been deprived of the royal patronage which was being conferred so munificently on the Buddhist church by this emperor.

Consequences of Asoka's religious and political policy

It was not only in matters religious that his zeal led Asoka to err on the wrong side but his policy of total abstention from warfare, and the consequent neglect of the *morale* of the army brought about results which ultimately proved detrimental to the interests of the State. The military machine went out of gear and when, soon after his death, the Indo-Greek invaders from the north-west crossed the Hindukush, the Mauryan army, which had hurled back the battalions of Seleucus, was unable to resist these petty invaders. In fact, some of the momentous political changes which eventually brought about these invasions were taking place in the neighbouring Greek empire during the life time of Asoka, but, passionately devoted as he

was to his religious mission, he took no notice of these and let the forces of disorder gather and grow in volume on the very frontiers of his empire.)

Asoka died after a long reign of forty years in or about 233 B.C. leaving a large family. The Buddhist, the Jain and the Puranic

Asoka's successors traditions mention by name several of his wives and sons. But they are of little or no value in constructing a detailed and reliable

account of the successors of this great monarch. The evidence is so conflicting that it is not possible to say, with any amount of certainty, which of his children actually succeeded him on the throne of Pataliputra or what events immediately followed his death. Dr. Vincent Smith's suggestion that after Asoka's death, his empire was partitioned amongst his grandsons, namely Dasaratha and Samprati, the former succeeding in the eastern and the latter in the western dominions is little more than a guess. All that seems certain is that the prestige and authority of the emperor rapidly declined, and none of the later rulers of this dynasty was strong enough to restore his power, and that the last of the line of the imperial Mauryans, namely Brihadratha, was deposed and assassinated in or about 184 B.C. by his general Pushyamitra, who seized the throne of Pataliputra and founded the Sunga dynasty of Magadha.

The mighty edifice of the Mauryans fell with a sudden crash within one generation of the death of the great Asoka, much

Causes of the decline as the great empire of the Mughals collapsed after the demise of Aurangzeb. In both cases, the forces of disruption first made their appearance within the empire, and these were followed by foreign aggressions which accelerated the process of decay.

Asoka's own Edicts seem to indicate that there was a good deal of maladministration in some of the provinces of the empire, and that, even in its most palmy days, the government at the centre failed to exercise effective control over its provincial officers. The emperor had, accordingly, often to censure their conduct and to resort to the practice of moving them every third or fifth year and sending out new ones in their place. "And for this purpose," runs the Kalinga Edict, "in accordance with the Law of Piety, I shall send forth in rotation every five years such persons as are of mild and temperate disposition, and regardful of the sanctity of life. From Ujjain, however, the Prince for this purpose will send out a similar body of officials, and they will not stay longer than three years. In the same way—from Taxila." Regarding the oppressive government in the frontier province of Taxila, we have also other evidence. Both Bindusara and Asoka, during their respective periods of viceroyalty, were specially despatched there to suppress revolts. It is thus clear that the loyalty of the outlying pro-

vinces was always doubtful, and the problem became more acute under the feeble successors of Asoka who had neither the strength nor, perhaps, the adequate resources to arrest the process of disruption. The result was that the sympathies of the people in these provinces were alienated from the Mauryan rule, and they broke away from the empire on the first opportunity.

The north-west frontier provinces were, probably, the first to set up an independent government under Prince Virasena. His successor Subhagasena, as Polybius informs us, entered into a friendly treaty with the Greek monarch, Antiochos, in 206 B.C. From Kalhana, the author of the *Rajatarangini*, we also learn that immediately after the death of Asoka, one of his sons, Jaluka, made himself independent in the province of Kashmir, and even conquered the plains up to Kanauj. Thus another province was torn away from the empire. The presence of half-conquered States within the empire, such as the kingdoms of the Kalingas and the Andhras, was another source of weakness. Under Asoka's benevolent government these States remained attached to the empire, but, as soon as his strong hand was removed, these southern dominions ceased to acknowledge the authority of the Magadhan emperor. King Kharvela of Kalinga, in fact, carried on a prolonged warfare against the Magadhan rulers who tried to recover this lost province for the empire.

While the provinces were thus falling off one by one, the Yavanas crossed the unguarded passes of the Hindukush and fell upon the helpless empire.¹ The Mauryan army had already lost its vigour and ardour under the pacific rule of Asoka, and his descendants were too feeble to restore the lost vigour. But Asoka himself cannot be wholly absolved from sharing the responsibility in the matter. He totally neglected the efficiency of his army and paid no heed to the political and military revolutions which were going on across his frontiers in the Greek kingdom, and were destined eventually to engulf his own empire.

The final *coup de grace* was, of course, given by Pushyamitra Sunga in 184 B.C. when he killed the last of the Maurya ruler and usurped the throne. Pushyamitra was a Brahmin by caste and was one of the generals of the Imperial Mauryan army. Mahamahopadhyaya Harprasad Sastri argues that the Brahmin general was prompted to organise and lead a reactionary movement against the anti-Brahminical policy of Asoka. But Mr. Sastri's argument does not seem very convincing. Though some of Asoka's acts may have caused temporary resentment among the members of the orthodox community, yet his re-

¹An account of these invasions by the Bactrian and Parthian kings is given in some detail in chapter VIII.

ligious policy was not anti-Brahminical to the extent that it should have brought about an organized opposition to his rule. It is probable that Pushyamitra was inspired by personal ambition alone. Such instances are not wanting in the history of our own or that of other countries. Again, it is possible, that Pushyamitra's act of putting an end to the rule of the inefficient successors of Asoka, was an expression of the feelings of the army as a body, whose interests were neglected by the State and were undermined by the pacifist policy of Asoka and his successors.

To sum up, therefore, the lack of effective control by the central government on provinces, the breaking away of the provinces like Kashmir, Gandhara and Taxila, and the regaining of their independence by the half-subdued States like the Kalingas and Andhras soon after the demise of Asoka, the Brahminical reaction and the resentment of the military nobility against Asokan policy and the foreign invasions led by the Bactrian and Parthian princes all combined to bring about the speedy collapse of the empire.

On the material side, Asoka's reign marks an important epoch in the development of the arts of building and sculpture in India. He was no doubt a great builder and is said to have built as many as 84,000 stupas besides pillars, caves and residential buildings. The number (84,000) is an obvious exaggeration but there is no doubt about the essential fact. Unfortunately little or no actual remains of the works of art of the Pre-Asokan period have survived,¹ and, it is, therefore, difficult to ascertain the degree of advancement made in this direction during his period of rule. It must not be supposed, however, that there was no art in the country before Asoka. On the other hand, the perfection which the art of sculpture attained during this period suggests, without doubt, that it had had a long period of continuous and steady development. In fact, some of the older European writers were led to observe that the period of Asoka was 'the culminating point in the progress of art and that the history of Indian art of later period is only the history of its decay.'

The artistic remains of the Asokan period may be conveniently described under the following heads: (1) Stupas, (2) Pillars, (3) Caves, and (4) Palaces.

The Stupas were built of brick or stone in the shape of a hemispherical dome. The main object of erecting a stupa was to deposit a relic of Buddha or of a great Buddhist saint. Hence

¹ The reason assigned for this absence of artistic remains of the earlier period are that no digging on an extensive scale has yet been done in the Gangetic valley and that most of the early Indian buildings were made of perishable material like wood. The latter view is also supported by Megasthenes who writes that in areas liable to flood the towns were built of wood, while those on high ground were of brick and mud.

a stupa acquired a sort of religious sanctity.¹ A very large number of these was built by Asoka all over his dominions.

(2) Pillars or *Lats* set up by Asoka furnish, perhaps, the most beautiful and characteristic specimens of the remains of the sculptural art of the age. Each of these huge columns consists of two parts, namely the shaft and the capital. The shaft is made of one piece of sandstone and gradually tapers at the top, the whole being admirably polished and finished. The capital, which surmounts the pillar, is also made from one block of stone and is exquisitely carved with animal and other figures. The workmanship of some of these capitals, and particularly that of the Sarnath column, has evoked unanimous applause from all critics of art. The animal figures on them look wonderfully life-like and the carving in every little detail is perfect.

Again, the Asokan pillars not only reveal the admirable skill of the sculptor of the age, but also furnish proofs of the art of engineering which the people had acquired in those ancient times. "The fabrication, conveyance, and erection of monoliths of such enormous size—the heaviest weighing about fifty tons," observes Dr. V. Smith, "are proofs that the engineers and stone-cutters of Asoka's age were not inferior in skill and resources to those of any time or country."

(3) The Caves were cut out of solid rock and are "wonderful monuments of patient skill and infinite labour." These were meant to be residences for monks and also served the purpose of churches and assembly halls. A number of these rock-cut churches are situated in the Barabar Hills near Gaya. The one called the Sudama Cave, dedicated by Asoka to the monks of the Ajivika sect, consists of two apartments: the outer one measuring about 33 feet in length and about 20 feet in breadth and the inner, or the one beyond it is almost circular in shape measuring about 20 feet by 19 feet.²

(4) Of the residential buildings of the Mauryan age, unfortunately, there are no exact specimens. That they were magnificent appears from the account of those who saw them. Fa-

¹ A general idea of the plan of a stupa building may be formed from the following description of the famous Stupa at Sanchi given by Sir John Marshall. "The great stupa consists of an almost hemispherical dome, truncated near the top, and surrounded at its base by a lofty terrace which served in ancient days as a procession path (*pradakhana*), access to which was provided by a double flight of steps built against it on the southern side. Encircling the monument on the ground level is a second procession path enclosed by a massive balustrade (rails) of stone. This balustrade, which is of plain design unrelieved by carving of any kind, is divided into four quadrants by entrances set approximately at the four cardinal points each one of which is adorned by a gateway lavishly enriched with relief on both the inner and the outer sides."

² The practice of building the caves which began with Asoka was continued in India till about the ninth century A.D. and some of the best ones are found in Bombay Presidency at Ajanta, Ellora and Salsette. The one at Karli has a beautiful pillared hall about 125 ft. long and 45 ft. wide.

hien, who had seen the palace of Asoka only in ruins, observes, "The royal palace and halls in the midst of the city (Pataliputra), which exist now as of old, were all made by spirits which he (Asoka) employed, which piled up the stones, reared the walls and gates, and executed the elegant carving and inlaid sculpture-work in a way which no human hands of this world could accomplish."

Before we conclude the story of the Mauryan art, it may be well to bring out a few of its leading features. The monolithic pillars combine the dignified and massive simplicity of the shaft with the exquisite and skilful carving of animal figures on their capitals. *Special features of the art*

Again, they reveal a sense of the precision and exactitude of the stone-cutter in as much as these huge pieces were cut from a single block of stone. Similarly, the cave-chapels have a style of their own which is equally chaste and severe. The polish and the skill with which it was applied to impart brilliancy to these stone monuments, is another feature of the art which excites both curiosity and admiration.

NOTES

(A) For a student of the political and cultural history of ancient India, the Mauryan period is of special interest. (a) Chandragupta swept away the Greek garrisons from the Panjab and Sind; established a vast empire in Northern India which he and his successors were able to maintain for more than one hundred years. (b) The Mauryan rulers established political and cultural contact with other civilised rulers like Seleucus of Syria, Ptolemy of Egypt, Antigonus of Macedonia, Tissa of Ceylon and the ruler of Nepal. (c) This contact with foreign rulers especially with the Greek kings of the West, helps us in fixing the dates of the Mauryan kings, as we know the dates of the Greek rulers. (d) It was the missionary zeal of Asoka which led him to send learned Buddhist preachers to the neighbouring kingdoms who brought the people of those lands under Buddhist influence. (e) India enjoyed blessings of continued peace during the Mauryan rule. Trade and commerce, science, literature and art flourished in the country. Some of the monuments of Asoka's reign are eloquent witnesses of the artistic achievements reached by the Indian engineers and artisans of the 3rd century B.C.

(B) **Mauryan Administration.** The machinery of government set up by Chandragupta was the one that suited the needs of a vast empire. The empire was divided into provinces and each province was further sub-divided into districts and big towns. A district was made up of a number of villages. (i) The government at the centre comprised the emperor and his ministers (Mantrins). These ministers were each in charge of one or more departments of government. Megasthenes and Kautilya both speak of a number of departments and departmental officers: officers in charge of markets, river-ferries, irrigation and canals, public buildings and roads, mines and forests, etc., etc. These graded officials carried on day to day administration as they do in modern times in all civilised countries. (ii) The government of a province

was organized on the model of the central government. (iii) The officers appointed over districts were expected to keep in touch with all branches of district administration and the village officers were made responsible for the peace and order in their jurisdiction. (iv) The municipal administration of Pataliputra excites our admiration and enables us to form an idea of the nature and degree of civilization which prevailed in India some 2000 years ago.

(C) **Mauryan Army.** The organization, equipment, efficiency and strength of the Mauryan army is also a subject of interesting study. Its efficiency was fully revealed when it was called upon to defend the empire against the aggressive invasion of Seleucus.

(D) **Mauryan Art.** Asoka was a great builder. He is said to have built a large number of stupas, pillars, caves and monastic houses. The art of sculpture reached the high water-mark of artistic achievement during his reign. Among the more pronounced features of this art are: the exquisite skill with which animal figures were carved in stone; the engineering skill with which these pillars of enormous size (some more than 1000 maunds in weight) were conveyed over long distances and then erected; the polish which was applied to impart brilliancy to stone; and the patience, labour and skill which was spent in cutting the cave-temples out of solid rocks.

(E) **Buddhism.** Asoka became a Buddhist after the Kalinga war. He vowed never to wage a war and placed all the resources of his vast empire at the service of the Buddhist church. He endowed it with large lands and with the income from these lands, the church used to maintain a large number of preachers. Gautama Buddha's religion was thus raised from the position of a local sect to that of a world religion. (See text for Asoka's other activities in this connection).

(F) **Asoka's Edicts.** Asoka is called his own biographer. This is because we find a good deal of material for his personal history in his Edicts. These are classified as Rock Edicts viz: those engraved on rocks; Pillar Edicts viz: those inscribed on stone pillars and Cave Inscriptions viz: those inscribed on the gateways of cave-temples.

(G) **Daily Life of the People.** The bulk of the people lived a simple life and were frugal in their diet and dress. They drank wine only on special occasions. Megasthenes describes them as strong, healthy, of steady habits, truthful and law-abiding. The contemporary literature as well as the Edicts of Asoka reveal that there was 'an almost universal belief in *papa* (sin), *punya* (charity), *parloka* (life hereafter), and *swarga* (heavens)! This kept the average man on the path of righteousness. Elementary education was wide-spread in the country. An average man could read and write in his vernacular and that was, perhaps, the reason why all Edicts of the government of Asoka were composed in Pali (Sanskrit being the language of the learned). The elementary teaching was provided by the richly endowed Buddhist monasteries. In fact, a monastery served as the centre of education for the village or a town in which it was situated.

QUESTIONS

1. Estimate the importance of the Mauryan Period.
2. Discuss the value of the sources of information for the history of the Mauryas with a particular reference to those which help us in fixing its chronology:

3. Write a critical note on the value of the writings of Kautilya and Megasthenes.
4. Give an outline of the machinery of government of the Mauryan kings. Do you find any points of resemblance with the machinery of government in modern India?
5. Chandragupta Maurya is called the 'First Historical Emperor of India.' Why?
6. Discuss the repercussions of the Kalinga war on: (a) Personal history of Asoka, (b) Mauryan imperial policy, (c) History of Buddhism.
7. "Asoka raised the religion of the Buddha from a local sect to a world religion." Comment on the above statement.
8. Explain the value of Asoka's Edicts as a source of (a) the personal history of Asoka, (b) the prevailing spiritual and moral views of the people.
9. Asoka's Dharma was "more a code of morals for the guidance of the daily life of his people than a set of spiritual dogmas to be followed by them." Explain.
10. "The beneficent activities of Asoka reveal that he anticipated the modern ideas regarding the socialistic activities of the State as early as the third century B.C." Explain.
11. Write a note on the achievements of the Indian people in the domain of sculptural art in the time of Asoka.
12. Write a note on the diplomatic relations established by the Mauryan kings with their contemporary foreign rulers.
13. Discuss the reactions of Asoka's religious and political policy on the stability of his empire.
14. Explain the causes of the collapse of the Mauryan empire.

MAURYA DYNASTY 321—184 B.C.

SERIAL No.	NAME.	Approximate Date.	REMARKS.
1.	Chandragupta	321-298 B.C.	Deposed the last Nanda ruler and seized the throne of Magadha. Established his authority over the whole of N. India. Defeated Seleucus. Set up an organised machinery of government with the aid of his minister Kautilya. Abdicated in 298 B.C.
2.	Bindusara	298-273 B.C.	Son of No. 1. Probably conquered some portions of the Deccan: at least maintained the empire intact. Kept up diplomatic relations with foreign rulers of Syria and Egypt.
3.	Asoka	273-233 B.C.	Son of No. 2—was one of the greatest rulers of India and the World. Turned Buddhist after the Kalinga War 259. B.C. The Edicts and other monuments of his reign reveal the glory of India of ancient days.

SERIAL No.	NAME.	Approximate Date.	REMARKS.
4.	Brihadratha	184 B.C.	Last of the Mauryas—was assassinated by Pushyamitra. The sequence of Kings intervening between No. 3 and No. 4 is not ascertainable.

CHAPTER VII.

The Sungas and the Andhras

SECTION I. THE SUNGAS AND THE KANVAS

Pushyamitra, who had usurped the throne of Magadha in or about 184 B.C. founded a new dynasty of rulers called the Sunga dynasty. The Sungas were a very old family of Brahmins claiming descent from the renowned Vedic sage, Bhardwaj.¹ The dynasty which Pushyamitra founded counts ten sovereigns according to the Puranic list, and ruled over Magadha for a period of 113 years. The story of Pushyamitra's *coup d'etat* with all its details, is given by Bana in his Harshacharita. According to Bana's narrative, Pushyamitra, who was the commander-in-chief of the Mauryan army, assembled the entire military force of the State on the pretext that he wished his sovereign to see what a fine army could be put into the field, and then assassinated him at the review.

The Sungas
184—72. B.C.

Pushyamitra, no doubt, succeeded to a very much shrunken empire of Magadha. The provinces of Gandhara and Taxila had already been lost to the empire. The valley of Kashmir was torn away from Magadha by Jaluka, the son of Asoka; and the Tamil provinces had regained their independence soon after the death of the emperor. It was, therefore, only the centre of the vast empire of Asoka (Bengal, Bihar, United Provinces, Rajputana, Malwa and the eastern Panjab), that passed to the Sungas, and of these, probably, portions of the Panjab and Rajputana were soon seized by the Bactrian Greeks.

*Extent of
Sunga
dominions*

Pushyamitra lived to a ripe old age and ruled for about thirty-six years. No systematic account of his reign is available, but a few references in Sanskrit literature seem to show that he proved a strong and resourceful ruler. At the time when he seized the throne of Magadha, the north-west frontier province of India and the Panjab were being overrun by the Bactrian Greeks and he was called upon to defend his dominions against these invaders which he did successfully.² The famous grammarian Patanjali, who was a contemporary of Pushyamitra, casually refers to a couple of such incidents in his book as

*Pushyamitra's
Wars with
the Greeks*

¹There are instances in the Mahabharatha where the Brahmins are said to have changed swords for the scriptures. Drona and Ashvathama, among others, are well-known instances.

²A detailed account of these invasions will be found in chapter VIII.

"*Arunad yavana Saketam; arunad yavana madhyamikam*," i.e. the Greek was besieging Saketa (Ayodhya); the Greek was besieging Madhyamika (near Chitor in Rajputana). Similar allusion to the Saketa campaign occurs, also, in one of the Puranas. It says 'the wicked and fiercely fighting Greeks occupied Saketa, Panchala, and Mathura but they will not stay here; there will be a cruel, dreadful war in their own kingdom, caused between themselves.' The poet Kalidasa, in his *Malavikagnimitra*, also refers to an encounter between the Sunga prince Vasumitra and a Yavana invader.

Another direction from which Pushyamitra seemed to have had constant trouble was Kalinga. Its king Kharvela was a powerful ruler and is said to have entered into a prolonged, aggressive and a successful war with Pushyamitra.

*War with
Kalinga*

The *Malavikagnimitra* also refers to a war between Pushyamitra's son Agnimitra, the governor of Vidisa (modern Gwalior State) and Yojansena, the ruler of Vidarbha (modern Berar) in which the Sunga prince came out victorious.

*War with
Vidarbha*

Pushyamitra was so pleased with his victories over the Greeks and the rulers of Kalinga and Berar that he celebrated the ancient Hindu rite of Ashvamedha.¹ Both Patanjali and Kalidasa allude to this event in their works. "*Iha Pushyamitram yajayamah*," i.e. here we perform the sacrifice for Pushyamitra," observes Patanjali in his book on grammar to illustrate the use of the present tense to denote an action which has been begun but not finished.

Horse Sacrifice

Pushyamitra died in 149 B.C. and was succeeded by his son, Agnimitra who was fairly advanced in age at the time of his accession and died after a reign of eight years. His son, Vasujeshtha then came to the throne and was succeeded in turn by his brother Vasumitra. This Vasumitra was, probably, the same prince Vasumitra who had escorted the sacrificial horse of his grandfather, and about whom Kalidasa says that he had an encounter with the Greeks on the banks of the river Sindhu in Malwa. Vasumitra was succeeded by six other princes of the Sunga house—the last of the line being Devabhuti or Devabhumi, who was assassinated by his chief military officer, Vasudeva in or about 72 B.C. The line of Pushyamitra thus met its end in the way it had originated.

*Pushyamitra's
successors*

¹According to this custom, a king who desired to celebrate the sacrifice would select a horse of a particular colour, and let it loose to wander wherever it chose, for a full year. The royal army followed the horse and if the animal went into the territory of another king, that king had to submit or fight. If the king succeeded in conquering all the rajahs of the countries into which the horse went, there was held, at the end of the year, a great festival, at which the horse was sacrificed.

Vasudeva founded another short-lived dynasty of Brahmin rulers which ruled over Pataliputra for about forty-five years.

The Kanvas
72—28 B.C. Of the Kanva kings, we know very little beyond the names of four kings of the house of Vasudeva. Nor, perhaps, did their dominions extend much beyond Pataliputra. The last of this line was dispossessed by the Andhras who were then the paramount power in the Deccan.

Importance of the Sunga Period The rule of the Sunga emperors is an important landmark in the political and cultural history of early India. They succeeded in arresting the further process of dismemberment of the Magadhan empire which had set in after the death of Asoka, and held a firm sway over the greater part of Northern and Central India. The wave of Greek invasion which had submerged the north-west frontier and the Panjab and further threatened to sweep over the interior of the country was not only checked but repulsed.

In the domain of cultural development, too, the rule of the Sungas is marked by an outburst of religious, literary and artistic activity. The inscriptions at Vidisa furnish proof of the prevalence and growing importance of the Bhagavata sect. Heliodoros, the ambassador of the Greek king Antalkidas II of Taxila, who came to the court of Maharaja Bhagbhadra, became a convert to the Bhagavata religion and set up a pillar in honour of Vishnu. The Bhagavata sect, it appears, was growing popular not only among the Indians but also among the foreigners. The performance of the horse-sacrifice by Pushyamitra also testifies to the revival of orthodox Hindu ritual which was discouraged in the day's of Asoka.

The literary records of the age count Patanjali's Mahabhashya among its best productions. Patanjali, the greatest genius of the period, was the contemporary of Pushyamitra and enjoyed his patronage. His writings gave a great stimulus to the study of Sanskrit literature and it went on gaining momentum in succeeding centuries till under the Guptas it revived with full force.

SECTION II THE ANDHRA-SATAVAHANAS

These two names are so mixed up in the Puranas as to suggest that the Andhras and the Satavahanas are one and the same people. But a closer examination of the available historical data would show that these two people did not belong to the same stock. The homeland of the Andhras was the region between the Godavari and the Krishna along the east coast of India. They are mentioned in the Aitareya Brahmin "as people beyond the pale of Aryanism." Later on Pliny who quotes from

Megasthenes speaks of the Andhras as wealthy and powerful people possessing large armies and fortified towns in their dominions. Asoka, in his Edicts, refers to the Andhra rulers as his feudatories.

The home province of the Satavahanas appears to have been either in Central India or in Western India. Their earliest inscriptions are found in the district of Poona and Sanchi (C. India). Again, the Satavahana Kings uniformly call themselves as Satavahana or Satakarni in their inscriptions. They never use the name Andhra for themselves. When and how the two people came to be mixed up cannot be ascertained with precision. From their home province in the Western or Central India the Satavahana Kings did extend their conquests eastward and ultimately occupied the whole of the Andhra country. Later on they were also compelled to surrender their western possessions to the Saka invaders and shifted their headquarters to the Andhradesha. It was, probably, then that they came to be known as the Andhras.

The date of the beginning of the rule of the Satavahanas is also uncertain. Some scholars assign the beginning of their power to the closing years of the third century B.C. whereas others place this date about 72 B.C. *Beginning of their rule* Simuka who is said to be the founder of the dynasty, subverted the Kanvas and the remnants of the Sunga power and established his own line of rulers which continued to rule with varying fortune for about four hundred years.¹

We know very little about Simuka. But we possess fair amount of information about his two immediate successors namely Krishna and Sri Satakarni, under whom the power of the Satavahanas extended considerably, almost across the entire width of India. The coins and inscriptions of Sri Satakarni seem to indicate that he was the real founder of the greatness of his line. *Early kings of the Satavahana dynasty*

He thoroughly subdued the remnants of the Sunga and the Kanva power and seized Malwa with its capital Ujjain. Later, his successors also seized Bhilsa and incorporated it in the Andhra dominion. *Sri Satakarni—the greatest ruler of the dynasty*

At the time of Sri Satakarni, the Satavahanas were at the height of their power.² Their dominions extended from sea

¹Simuka was probably descended from a Brahmin ancestor. At least some of the inscriptions of the later Satavahana Kings suggest a Brahmin origin for the dynasty.

²A cave inscription at the Nanaghat Pass inscribed by the order of the queen of Sri Satakarni tells us that her husband ruled over the whole of the Deccan, and that he and his queen performed many sacrifices including horse-sacrifice and gave away large sums of money and many cattle. This fact is also corroborated by an inscription of King Kharvela of Kalinga which represents Satakarni Andhra as the supreme ruler of the west.

Extent of the Andhra Empire to sea, including Maharashtra in the west and the region between the Godavari and the Krishna on the eastern coast, the whole of modern Berar, Hyderabad and the Central Provinces together with Malwa. The capital of the Satavahanas was first Srikakula on the Krishna, and later Dhanyakataka, higher up the same river. But as his empire extended Satkarni set up his capital at Pratishthana or Paithan in the modern Hyderabad State. In northern India, the successors of Satkarni had overthrown the last of the Kanva rulers of Magadha (28 B.C.) and had become masters of the Gangetic valley. Thus the modern provinces of Oudh, Bihar and Bengal came in their possession.

After the reign of Satkarni, the third king of the dynasty till Hala, the seventeenth of the line, we have, unfortunately, very little or no epigraphical record about the *Succeeding Period and the influx of the Sakas* Satavahana dynasty. Even about Hala all we know is that he was a man of literary taste and is the reputed author of the poetical work in the Marathi language called the *Saptasataka*.

In the beginning of the second century A.D., however, when Gautamiputra Satkarni, the twenty-third of the line, came to the throne the records again become available. In the meantime, there had risen to power on the western coast of India, the Saka dynasty which drove out the Satavahanas from Maharashtra and Malwa and became its almost irresistible rival.¹

Gautamiputra Satkarni was a gifted ruler. He reigned for about thirty years and during this period he did as much to restore the fallen fortunes of his house as Sri *Gautamiputra Satkarni* A.D. 106—128 Satkarni had done to build up the empire some twenty generations before him. Taking advantage of the weakness of the Saka rulers, he demolished their power and re-established the power of the Satavahana family—both in Maharashtra and in Malwa. One of the inscriptions at Nasik mentions the following provinces as included within the dominions of Gautamiputra: Maharashtra, North Konkan, Surashthra, eastern and western Malwa, Rajputana, Vidarbha or Berar and Paithan. This inscription is dated in the reign of Sri Pulumavi, the son and successor of Gautamiputra, and was inscribed by the order of the king's grandmother, Bata Sri, to commemorate the glories of her son. Gautamiputra's military achievements against the Saka rulers are also confirmed by coins found in the Nasik district.

Pulumavi succeeded his father on the throne in or about 128 A.D. and like his father was a strong and resourceful ruler.

Sri Pulumavi A.D. 128—158 It appears from his coins and inscriptions that Pulumavi, too, like his father, was engaged in warfare against the Sakas. This was another

¹A fuller account of the Saka rulers, will be found in Chapter VIII.

branch of the foreign Saka rulers who had established themselves under their leader Chastana. Chastana had succeeded in recovering a good portion of the Saka territory which was conquered by Gautamiputra Satkarni. Eventually, however, peace was restored between the Sakas and the Satavahanas by a matrimonial alliance, when Pulumavi married the daughter of the Saka chief Rudradaman.

Some fifteen years after the close of the reign of Pulumavi, we have records of another powerful ruler of this dynasty named Yajna Sri Satkarni. The strife with the Sakas seems to have continued even in his reign and Yajna Sri had the upper hand in the

Yajna Sri
A.D. 173-202

struggle. Amongst his coins are found some silver ones in the style of the Saka rulers which seem to suggest that these were intended for circulation in those districts which he had conquered. Again, some of Yajna Sri's coins bear the figure of a two-masted ship which indicates that his power extended over the sea and that a beginning of colonial settlement in the Malaya Peninsula was made in his reign.

Yajna Sri was the last great ruler of the Satavahana family. Their power declined and the Andhra dominions after him were broken up and shared by the Abhiras in the west (Maharashtra), the Pallavas in the east and the Kadambas in the Kuntala region.

*Collapse of the
Andhra power*

Under what circumstances the collapse of the mighty Andhra power was brought about, we have no available records to tell us. Some of the principalities which came into being on the ruins of the Andhra empire, seem to suggest that its fall was brought about in the manner in which the empires in the east have usually collapsed. The more powerful of the feudal chiefs of the empire like the Nagas and Chutus had set up independent rule in their respective jurisdiction during the declining years of the Satavahana family, and the process of disintegration was further accelerated when the local Pallava chiefs joined hands with the Chutu chief of Banavasi and cut off another big slice from the southern portion of the empire. This downward course on which the empire had started gained a sort of momentum from the prolonged struggle between the Satavahanas and the Sakas. Their hold on the western portion of their dominions was practically lost when Rudradaman reconquered Maharashtra and Gujarat-Kathiawar. In the eastern Deccan, the Satavahanas, lingered on for some time more but their glory had vanished and they succumbed before the Pallavas by the close of the third century A.D.

The Satavahanas founded the first great empire in the Godavari valley which, as we have seen, lasted for about four hundred years. During this period, the Deccan made considerable progress in literary and cultural development. The inscriptional and other records

*Social and
Economic
Conditions*

throw a good deal of light on the social life of the period. Buddhism and Brahminism continued to flourish side by side. There was no antagonism between the two. Instances are not wanting where the votaries of the Brahmin creed granted stipend for the education of the Buddhist monks. Numerous caves were excavated during this period for the use of the Buddhist monks and provision was also made for their maintenance by the endowment of landed property attached to these cave-monasteries. Brahminism was also in an equally flourishing condition. Some of the Satkarni rulers revived the Brahminical rites like the Ashvamedha and Rajsuya sacrifices. Indra, Vasudeva, and Shiva were amongst the most popular deities worshipped by the people. We also find foreigners embracing either Hinduism or Buddhism. A process of social amalgamation seems also to have set in, and an illustration of this is seen in the marriage of the Satkarni king, Pulumavi, to the daughter of the Saka ruler Rudradaman.

The large sums of money spent on endowments and sacrifices by kings and private persons testify to the wealth of the people. There was a brisk and flourishing trade, especially with the Roman world. The Andhras were masters of important ports and harbours like Broach on the western coast of India. Similarly, the sea ports of the eastern coast under their control had a flourishing trade in spices with the Malaya Peninsula.

With the development of trade and commerce, the people following different occupations organised themselves into craft-guilds or self-governing corporations and regulated their business concerns on principles of mutual good-will. These corporations also acted as banks and freely gave and received money at interest. We hear of numerous craft-guilds like those of weavers, goldsmiths, corn-dealers, potters, etc.

The Andhra rulers were great patrons of vernacular literature. One of them, Hala, was himself an author and a versifier. Their

Progress of Learning inscriptions, like those of Asoka, are mostly in the dialect of the people. Whether Sanskrit was deliberately ignored we cannot say, but

the traditional and other evidence definitely shows that it was the Prakrit literature that flourished at the court of the Brahmin Satavahana kings. This fact will seem all the more interesting when we know that their contemporary Saka rulers in western India were using Sanskrit in their inscriptions.

During the process of disruption of the Mauryan empire, the province of Kalinga had also become independent. Beyond this fact, however, we have no definite

King Kharvela of Kalinga information about the history of the country or its rulers. The celebrated Hathigumpha inscription on the Udayagiri hills (Puri) only

partially helps in constructing a brief history of King Kharvela, the third ruler of the Ceta dynasty. The inscription, unfortunately, ends with the thirteenth year of Kharvela's rule and is undated.

The evidence furnished by the inscription shows—though not very definitely—that Kharvela flourished about the third quarter of the first century B.C., and that he ascended the throne in the 24th year of his life. His early education was well attended to and he had been fully trained in the art of government. Despite the tremendous fighting in which he was engaged against the rulers of Magadha, the Satavahana King Satkarni and the Greek invaders, King Kharvela did not neglect to attend to the development of trade and agriculture. The composer of the inscription tells us that “in the 5th year of his reign, Kharvela extended a canal that had been used for 300 years since Nand Raja had brought it into the capital.” By faith King Kharvela was a Jain and is credited with having spent large amount of public revenues in excavating caves for Jain monks.

NOTES

(A) **The Singas.** The Singa kings rendered valuable political service to the empire of Magadha inasmuch as they re-infused vigour in the administration. The army was reorganised and the nation was equipped to resist, with success, the invasion of the Greek Princes from Bactria. Had the old order continued, it was likely that the flood of Greek invasion which had already submerged Afghanistan and the Panjab, might have swept over the whole of the interior of the country. Pushyamiitra stopped its further progress and saved the tottering empire and gave it another lease of life for a century or so. In the domain of religion, the services of the Singa rulers to the cause of Brahminism, deserve a pointed notice. Some of the important orthodox rites like the horse-sacrifice which had gone into disuse under Asoka and his successors, were revived by the Singas. Again, it was under the patronage of these kings that the Sanskrit scholar like Patanjali composed his celebrated work, the Mahabhashya, and thus supplied a fresh stimulus to the study of Sanskrit literature. In fact, the foundations for the revival of the Brahminical religion and literature which came with full force under the Guptas, were laid in the time of the Singas.

(B) **The Satavahanas 220 B.C.—A.D. 225.** This period of 400 years is one of the very glorious periods in the history of the Deccan. The Satavahana kings established their rule over the entire breadth of the country from sea to sea. Their dominions included the modern Berar, Hyderabad, Central Provinces, Malwa, and Maharashtra in the west and the country near the Ghats in the east. At one time, Oudh, Bihar, and Bengal were also included in the Satavahana dominions when the last of the Kanva rulers of Magadha was deposed and put aside by a Satavahana king in 27 B.C.

Another outstanding feature in the political and military history of the Satavahanas is their long-drawn struggle with the foreign princes (Sakas) ruling in Malwa and Gujarat-Kathiawar. As the Singas had saved the Gangetic valley from the flood of the Bactrian invasion during

the second century B.C., the Satavahanas carried on an offensive and defensive warfare against the Sakas for the whole of the first century A.D. and kept them confined to the regions of Malwa and Gujarat.

The period of the Satavahana kings is also important in the social, economic and cultural history of the Deccan. The prolonged political struggle between the Satavahanas and the Sakas, it appears, had brought the two in closer social contact. Some of these foreign princes had embraced Hinduism and others Buddhism. This process of amalgamation was further marked by marriage alliance. The Satkarni king, Pulumavi, married the daughter of the Saka ruler Rudradaman. A fuller account of the progress made by the nation in the domain of trade, commerce, art and literature has been given at the end of the chapter.

THE SUNGAS AND THE KANVAS OF MAGADHA B.C. 184—72

SERIAL No.	NAME.	Approximate Date.	REMARKS.
1.	Pushyamitra Sunga	184-149 B.C.	He was the Commander-in-chief of the Mauryan army—seized the throne after assassinating his royal master. Reorganised the army and stemmed the tide of Greek invasions from Bactria.
2.	Agnimitra	149-141 B.C.	Son of No. 1.
3.	Vasujeshtha	141 B.C. —?	Son of No. 2.
4.	Vasumitra	.....	Brother of No. 3. A prince of consummate military ability who scored a victory over the Bactrians during the reign of No. 1.
5.	Devabhuti	....72 B.C.	Last of the Sunga rulers. Between No. 4 and No. 5 as many as 4 kings ruled over Magadha but their dates and sequence are not fully established.
1.	Vasudeva Kanva and his four successors	72-27 B.C.	Minister of No. 5 whom he killed and seized the throne. The dynasty of the Kanvas was a short-lived dynasty.
1.	Simuka	225 B.C. —?	Originally a feudatory of the Mauryas; became independent after the death of Asoka.
2.	Krishna	.....	Brother of No. 2. Extended the Andhra dominions.
3.	Sri Satkarni	170. B.C....	Son of No. 1. He is mentioned in the Hathigumpha inscription (circa B.C. 150). He extended his dominions still further and performed horse-sacrifice.

THE ANDHRAS 225 B.C.—A.D. 225

SERIAL No.	NAME.	Approximate Date.	REMARKS.
4.	Hala	.....	Between No. 3 and No. 4, 13 kings of the dynasty ruled over the shrinking dominions; but not much is known about them.
5.	Gautamiputra Satkarni	A.D. 106-128	Between No. 4 and No. 5, five kings came on the throne. Gautamiputra restored the failing fortunes of the family.
6.	Vasishtiputra Pulumavi	A.D. 128-158	Son of No. 5. Both Nos. 5 and 6 had to wage wars with the Saka Satraps of Gujarat and Malwa. No. 6 married the daughter of Rudradaman Satrap.
7.	Yajna Sri Satkarni	A.D. 173-202.	Last ruler of note of this dynasty.
8.	Vijaya Sri, Chandra Sri and Pulumavi IV	A.D. 202-225.	The power of the Andhras was fast declining.

QUESTIONS

1. Who were the Singas? How did they come into power? Describe the part played by the kings of this dynasty in (a) the history of the Magadhan empire and (b) in the revival of Brahminism.
2. Give in outline, the history of the Andhra empire under the Satavahanas with a special reference to their struggle with the Saka Satraps of the west.
3. Estimate the contributions of the Satavahana kings to the domain of cultural, social and economic history of the Deccan.
4. Write notes on the careers of Pushyamitra, Kharvela, Sri Satkarni and Gautamiputra Satkarni.

CHAPTER VIII.

Foreign Invaders in Northern and Western India

SECTION I. THE INDO-GREEK DYNASTIES

We have had occasion to refer to the invasion of Seleucus Nikator, and of the settlement of the boundaries of the Seleucid and the Mauryan empires in the time of Chandragupta. In the settlement thus made, the whole of Afghanistan south of the Hindukush passed to the Mauryan monarch, while Seleucus retained Bactria. The province of Bactria, being an outpost of the Syrian monarchy, was placed under the charge of a Greek governor with extensive military powers. During the reigns of Seleucus and his son Antiochos I, Bactria remained quiet. Under Antiochos II, sometime about 250 B.C. a Bactrian governor named Diodotos is said to have set up an independent military kingdom in that region. About the same time, another province known as Parthia and adjoining Bactria¹ also underwent a revolution and broke away from the Syrian rule, under its national leader named Arsakes.

The new rulers of Bactria and Parthia, probably, came to a mutual understanding and set about the task of strengthening their respective possessions. They seem to have been helped in their ventures by the indifferent and slothful attitude of the Syrian monarchs, Seleucus II and Seleucus III.

Antiochos III (223-187, B.C.) however, shook off his lethargy, and led an expedition in 212 B.C. hoping to regain the allegiance of the Parthian and Bactrian rebels, but he found the task very difficult. Arsakes III, who was now on the throne of Parthia, came to terms with Antiochos and the latter also being anxious for some sort of settlement, accepted the terms offered and moved on to Bactria.

Bactria was, at this time, governed by one Euthydemus. We do not know who this king was or how he came to power. His protest to Antiochos that he was not a rebel but had become king by putting the children of rebels to death, suggests that he had slain Diodotos II and seized the throne of Bactria. His protest, however, proved unavailing and Antiochos laid siege

¹Bactria comprised modern Balkh between Hindukush and the Oxus, and Parthia comprised modern Khurasan and S.E. of Caspian.

to the capital of Bactria (208 B.C.) which Euthydemos defended valiantly for a long time. At last, the parties became anxious for peace and the Syrian monarch was so much impressed with the ability of Demetrios, the youthful son of Euthydemos, who conducted the peace negotiations, that he gave him his daughter in marriage¹ and acknowledged the independence of Bactria.

Antiochos received some provisions for his army and war elephants from his new ally Euthydemos, and crossed over the Hindukush into the Kabul valley. Kabul was ruled by a chief named Subhagasena, who, according to Strabo's statement, tendered his homage to Antiochos and renewed his friendship with the Syrian monarch. Subhagasena was, very probably, a grandson of Asoka, and the son of prince Virasena who, as the Tibetan historian Tarnath tells us, had set up his independent authority in Gandhara after the death of Asoka.

Antiochos then abandoned his further programme, if he had any, and returned to Mesopotamia via Kandahar and Kirman.

Having strengthened their position by an alliance with Antiochos, Euthydemos and his son Demetrios, now turned their attention towards India. The break up of the Mauryan empire offered them further encouragement in their venture and they eventually succeeded in establishing their authority in Herat, Kabul, Kandahar and the western Panjab. A large number of Euthydemos' coins have been discovered with varying portraiture from youth to old age which indicate that he ruled over a vast kingdom and for a long time. He died about 190 B.C. His son, Demetrios, carried on the ambitious policy of his father and feeling secure in Bactria spent most of his time in the Panjab strengthening his new possessions. It is, probably, for this reason that in European tradition he is known as the king of the Indians.² The bilingual coins with legends in Greek and Kharoshti scripts issued by Demetrios point to the same conclusion.

While Demetrios was engaged in his Panjab campaigns, one of his Greek military officers named Eucratides organised a revolt against him, seized Bactria and established his own authority in the province in 175 B.C. Then ensued a prolonged war between Eucratides and Demetrios but it appears that the latter eventually abandoned his claims on Bactria and was content with his possessions in the Panjab.

¹W.W. Tarn in "The Greeks in Bactria and India" observes that Antiochos never gave his daughter in marriage to Demetrios.

²Cf. Chaucer's description of Demetrios "the grete Emetreus, the king-of Inde."

We know little of the family of Demetrios except the names of the Kings which appear on their coins. Nor do we know the exact limits of their dominions in the Panjab. But as they were pushed out from the western Panjab by Eucratides we may surmise that the rule of the Demetrios family was confined to a limited area in the eastern Panjab.

Eucratides did not long retain his ill-gotten power in Bactria. He was pressed by the Parthian king, Mithridates, from the west and by the Sakas¹ from the north.

Thus finally driven from his kingdom of Bactria, Eucratides crossed the Hindukush into Afghanistan and dislodged Demetrios from his authority in that region and subsequently forced him and his successors out of the western Panjab. The Panjab thus came to be divided into two regions ruled by the two rival Greek houses of Demetrios and Eucratides—the former ruling over the portion east of the river Jhelum with Sagala (Sialkot) as its capital, and the latter with its rule extending over Taxila, Peshawar, Kapisa and the Kabul valley.

*Division of
the Territory.*

We have several names of the family of Eucratides on their coins, and concerning one of them, Antalkidas, we have even an inscriptional evidence. It was he who sent his ambassador Heliodorus to the court of Maharaja Bhagbhadra, the Sunga ruler of Vidisa about whom reference occurs in the Besnagar inscription.

Of the Greek rulers of the Panjab, the most celebrated name in Indian literature is that of Menander who belonged to the family of Demetrios. He is described by Strabo as “a great conqueror, who conquered more nations than Alexander”. How far his dominions spread in India cannot be ascertained with precision but his coins have been, indeed, found widely distributed from Kabul to Mathura. Menander is Milinda, king of Sakala, of the *Malindapannha*,—a Buddhist philosophical treatise in the form of a dialogue between the king and the Buddhist sage, Nagasena. The Greek king is represented to have been puzzling the sages with heretical questions but as the result of his debate with Nagasena, he became a convert to Buddhism. Menander’s name is very popular in the Buddhist literature and according to Plutarch, he was even deified and his ashes, like those of a Buddhist saint, were distributed among several Buddhist churches for preservation.

Menander

It was, probably, Menander, the Yavana invader, about whom Patanjali speaks as having advanced upon Madhyadesha and Magadha.

It will, thus appear from the foregoing narrative that the

¹ A fuller history of the Sakas is given later in these pages.

whole region comprising the Kabul and the Sind valleys was conquered and absorbed piecemeal by the Greeks of Bactria within half a century after the death of Asoka. The Greek kingdoms survived for a period of a little over one century when they fell into the hands of nomad invaders (Sakas) and the Hellenic power disappeared from India.

*End of Greek
rule in the
Panjab 50 B.C.*

The Bactrian Greeks remained in possession of Gandhara and the Indus valley for well nigh over a century.¹ It is natural, therefore, to ask what India gained from the cultured Bactrian rule. It is very likely, almost certain, that many Indians must have learnt Greek and become familiar with Greek literature and thought. Similarly, several Greek literary men must have made themselves acquainted with Indian literature, but specific evidence on the point is very scanty. Not a single Greek inscription has, so far, been discovered in India. It is only in a limited sphere of Indian thought that we can trace the Hellenic influence and this is equally true of Greek literature so far as the influence of contemporary Indian thought is concerned.

*Greek influence
on Indian Civi-
lization : Astro-
nomy, Medicine
and Philosophy.*

The Indian texts which deal with medicine, astronomy and astrology show unmistakable evidence of Greek influence. The Indian astronomers, in fact, in their works on the subject gratefully quote from the Greek astronomers, or the Yavanacharyas as they call them. The author of the Gargi Samhita, for instance, while speaking of the Greeks as Yavanas or barbarians, adds that 'the science of astronomy originated with them and for this reason they must be revered like Gods.' Greek names for the planets and the signs of the zodiac and other technical terms of Greek astronomy are freely employed in Sanskrit astronomical books. Again, the art of casting horoscopes which has been quite extensively practised in India was characterised by Greek methods. The university of Taxila which was situated in the heart of the Indo-Bactrian dominion owed, probably, the development of its faculty of medicine to Greek influence, although the suggestion that Charaka, the famous court physician of Kanishka, borrowed largely from the Greek system of medicine finds little or no substantial support. Beyond this restricted field of Indian scientific literature we are not able to trace any influence of Greek thought on Indian poetry, drama, philosophy or religion. On the other hand, the Neo-Platonic School of Greek philosophy which advocated the practice of asceticism and also subscribed to the view of abstaining from flesh diet reveals the influence of the Buddhist

¹In fact, the direct contact between India and the culture of independent Greek States was of a much longer duration. It began with Megasthenes' residence at Pataliputra and continued since that date.

philosophy of Ahimsa and that of the Hindu doctrine of Yoga or meditation.

In the domain of religion, if there was any slight effect of Greek thought on Indian systems of religion, it was entirely confined to Mahayana Buddhism: Brahminism was not affected at all. A Brahmin, as Dr. Vincent Smith rightly observes, 'was well able to take care of himself and to keep at arm's length any foreign notions which he did not wish to assimilate.' The tendency, on the contrary certainly was for the Indo-Bactrian people and princes to adopt Hinduism or Buddhism as each appealed to them. Inscriptions further prove that the Greeks readily intermarried with the natives of the country, and King Menander's adoption of Buddhism and the fact of the Taxilian ambassador, Heliodorus, becoming a votary of Vishnu are suggestive of the processes of assimilation, which must have been at work, though we have no precise knowledge of their operation. The celebrated Indian poet and dramatist Kalidasa, in one of his plays introduces Yavana (Greek) maid servants serving on the household establishment of Indian Kings.

In the matter of Indian coinage and plastic art, no doubt, the Greek influence is more marked. In fact, the Indians borrowed all their notions of striking beautiful coins from double dies from the Greeks. The Indian artists before coming in contact with the foreign artists never troubled about die-cutting and therefore never produced a really beautiful coin. Later on, however, the beautiful Roman gold coins which were brought to India by the traders exercised a considerable influence on Indian coinage.¹

As regards the Greek influence on Indian art, the Gandhara School of sculpture is, perhaps, its most eloquent testimony. Gandhara, in olden days, was the name of the region lying between the Kabul and the Indus—now eastern Afghanistan and the North-Western province. This region has yielded, in very great numbers, specimens of beautiful sculptures which, in style, technique and finish are entirely different from all those found in other parts of India. The pose of the statues, their physical features, the drapery and the manner of dressing the hair, etc., are all after the Greek fashion, which clearly shows that these figures were carved either by Greek craftsmen or by Indian workmen under the guidance of Greek artisans. The subject matter treated in the Gandhara art is the life of Gautama Buddha from birth to death and the various episodes connected

¹The origin of the word *dam* can be traced to the Prakrit *dramma* and on to Greek coin *drachma*.

with it. Thus, the Gandhara art represents a type by itself in which the skill of Greek art was applied to Indian or Buddhist subjects. Hence this school of art has been often labelled as Graeco-Buddhist and Indo-Hellenic.

The most important contribution of this school to Indian sculpture is the fashioning of images of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas. Before the emergence of this school the sculptors of Bharut, Sanchi and other schools or art in India used to depict scenes from Buddha's life, but they never showed the Buddha himself in the picture. His presence was merely indicated by a conventional symbol such as a pair of sandals, or an umbrella or a wheel. In the Gandhara sculpture, the Buddha himself is the most conspicuous figure and his worship is everywhere the inspiring motive. Henceforward we find that all Buddhist structures, like stupas and the monasteries of North-Western India, were decorated in the new style introduced by the Indo-Greeks. How far the art of Gandhara influenced the art of Mathura and Amravati schools is a moot point. Some of the critics hold the view that Mathura and Amravati schools derived their inspiration from Gandhara while others believe that the Indo-Hellenic art was limited to North-Western India and was unimportant in its results.

SECTION II. THE INDO-PARTHIAN AND SCYTHIAN DYNASTIES

Parthia was the other province which had become independent of the Seleucid monarchy in 250 B.C. It was ruled by its own native kings for nearly 500 years. This line of kings is known as the Arsakidan line, from Arsakes the first of them. In course of time their power spread from Parthia (Khurasan) over the whole of Persia. Later on, the Parthian monarchs began to extend their dominions towards India. Mithridates I (174-136 B.C.) took possession of Taxila and opened the way for further penetration into India. But the Parthian monarchs were soon obliged to suspend their activities in India as they were called upon to defend their home provinces against the invasion of the Sakas.

*Parthian Kings
of the Arsakes
dynasty*

The Sakas or Scythians were a nomadic people who lived on the banks of the Jaxartes river. Being forced out of their and Parthian kingdoms about the middle of the second century homelands by the Yuch-chi tribe they swept upon the Bactrian and Parthian Kingdoms about the middle of the second century B.C.¹

*The Saka inva-
sion of Parthia*

¹ Later on they made their way to India and entered the country in various bands. One band settled in the south of Afghanistan and gave the name of Sakasthan or Seistan to this settlement. Another band entered into Sind probably through the Bolan Pass and then pushed southwards into western India; while those who moved through the Kabul valley into the Panjab settled round about Taxila. Still another band pressed on to the banks of the Jumna and set up a principality at Mathura.

The Bactrian Greeks, as we have seen before, surrendered their country after some struggle and the family of Eucratides sought shelter in their possessions in the Kabul valley and the Panjab. But the Parthians, under their great king Mithridates II, succeeded not only in pushing back the Sakas from occupying Ariana (Herat) but also established their supremacy over those nomads who were already settled in Sakasthan (Seistan) and Kandahar.

After the death of Mithridates (88 B.C.) however, the Parthian kings failed to maintain effective control over their eastern provinces of Ariana, Seistan and Kandahar. *Indoscythians* with the result that some of the Saka chiefs were associated in government with the Parthian rulers. The subordinate governments of the Parthian empire thus came to be occupied by mixed Saka and Parthian chiefs and it were these Scytho-Parthian vassals of the Parthian kings who ultimately asserted their independence and began to invade India. They even assumed the Parthian (Persian) titles like *Shahan Shah* or king of kings and had struck coins on their models. The Parthian rule over India thus came to an end soon after 88 B.C. and the new cycle of foreign rulers namely of the Saka rulers may be said to have begun.

The earliest of these Saka kings of India is Maues whose name appears on his coins and who is identical with Moga of the Taxila plate inscription and with Mao of the Maira (salt range) well-inscription. He established himself in Gandhara and Taxila and very probably also wrested the eastern Panjab from the descendants of Demetrios.

Maues or Moga
75 B.C.

Maues was succeeded by Azes I who is regarded by some scholars as the founder of the Vikram era viz. 58 B.C.¹. According to numismatic evidence Azilises came after Azes I and in turn was succeeded by another Azes designated Azes II. After him the Saka territories passed under the sway of Gondopharnes. He is connected with the legend of St. Thomas

¹The Sakas had established their power in Malwa. According to Jain accounts they were ousted from this region by a king named Vikramaditya who then made Ujjain his capital. This Vikramaditya was the son of a chief named Gardavhila. To commemorate his victory he founded a new era (58 B.C.). Hence it is known after his name as Vikram era. Since then this era became current in Malwa. But Saka rule was re-established in Ujjain after a century and a half about the beginning of the 2nd century A.D. and was again overthrown by Chandragupta II of the Gupta dynasty in A.D. 389. Chandragupta II, with a view to revive the memory of Malwa's first independence from the Sakas by Vikramaditya adopted the use of the old era and also assumed the designation of Vikramaditya. Dr. Sten Konow holds this view. But Sir John Marshall, on the contrary believes that the era in question (58 B.C.) was founded by Azes I and adduces tangible reasons in support of this contention.

who is said to have visited the court of Gondopharnes as the head of the Christian mission to India. After him, the Scytho-Parthian power declined and was ultimately swallowed up by the new power of the Kushans.

During the times of Maues and his successors, there were several families of Saka chiefs who styled themselves as Satraps, and were ruling in Taxila, Mathura and other places in Northern India as well as in Kathiawar and Malwa in western India. A large number of their coins and inscriptions which have been made available help us in constructing the history of these satrapal families.

*The Saka
Satraps*

The word Satrap is a Greek form of the Persian Kshatrapavan which signifies the governor of a province or satrapy. It is very probable that these Saka chiefs, and particularly those who ruled in the Panjab, at first owned the Parthian kings of that day as their over-lords and adopted the title of Satraps, and they seem to have retained it even after they had become independent rulers.

Of the satrapal families that ruled in northern India, there were two lines of kings. One ruled at Taxila and the other at Mathura. The best known of the Taxilian family were Laika Kusulka and his son Patika, the Satraps of the Parthian king Maues, whose names are preserved in the inscription at Taxila.

*The Taxila and
Mathura
Satraps*

Similarly, the names of several Satraps of Mathura, like those of Mahakashtrapa Rajula and his son Kshatrapa Sudasa are found inscribed on the famous lion capital of Mathura (25 B.C.)¹ What exactly were the relations between the two satrapal families which ruled over Taxila and Mathura we do not know.

The Mathura Satraps were, pretty frequently, called upon to fight defensive wars with the Satavahana kings when the latter had taken possession of Magadha in 28 B.C. by overthrowing the Kanvas. Ultimately, however, all these northern Satraps were, in the second century A.D., overcome by the Kushan kings.

The Saka tribes who went down into Gujarat-Kathiawar settled in large numbers in western Maharashtra. Their chiefs are known as the Western Satraps. They ruled the countries now called the Konkan, Gujarat-Kathiawar, Kutch, Sind and Malwa for nearly four hundred years, and were, for the most time, contemporaries of the Satavahana kings.

*The Western
Satraps.*

The earliest of the Western Satraps who struck coins in his

¹This monument is preserved in the British Museum. It was discovered at Mathura by Pandit Bhagwan Lal, in 1869. The inscription shows that it was donated by the queen of the great Satrap Rajula.

own name was Bhumaka. He was followed by Nahapana (A.D. 78-124) who appears from inscriptions to have been a strong ruler and the real founder of the line of Western Kshatrapa rulers. He uses the title of raja on his coins whereas Bhumaka only styles himself as Kshatrapa. The cave inscriptions of Ushvadata, son-in-law of Nahapana¹, discovered at Nasik and Karla indicate the extent of Nahapana's dominions, which stretched from Malwa to Nasik on the upper Godavari. There is also another reference to Nahapana in the cave inscription of Junnar (Poona district) which was endowed by his minister, Aryaman. The names of towns and rivers mentioned in the inscriptions of Ushvadata suggest that the centre of Nahapana's power lay towards the coast. Again, Nahapana's coins reveal the king in youth, middle age and old age, which suggest that he ruled for a long time and lived to a great age.

As we have already said Nahapana had a long struggle with the Andhra-Satavahana rulers of the Deccan and suffered heavily in his wars with Gautamiputra Satkarni who is said, in one of his inscriptions, to have 'exterminated the race of Kshatrapas.' The absence of inscriptions or coins of any of Nahapana's successors certainly shows that the Andhra victory was complete.

Another dynasty of Satraps whose power centred about Ujjain was that founded by Chastana. The date of Chastana's accession is believed to be A.D. 78 which is also accepted as the beginning of the Saka era. Unlike the Satrapal family of Bhumaka, the family of Chastana was destined to rule for several centuries.

Chastana seems to have taken advantage of the wars between Nahapana and the Andhra king Satkarni and extended his territory without any hindrance from either power. He reigned for about thirty-two years. He bore the title of Maha Kshatrapa. His son, Jayadaman (A.D. 110-120) appears from his coins, to have borne the title of Kshatrapa and not Maha Kshatrapa which suggests that the dynasty suffered serious territorial losses, obviously in their wars with the Andhras.

Rudradaman (A.D. 120-150), the son and successor of Jayadaman, however, was a resourceful ruler and restored the falling fortunes of his dynasty. He seems to have had his training from his grandfather Chastana under whom he served as the governor of Kathiawar province. In one of his inscriptions Rudradaman claims a decisive victory over the Andhras which is also confirmed by his adoption of the title of Maha Kshatrapa. He had also conquered the 'proud and indomitable'

¹The name of Nahapana's daughter was Dakshmitra. Both these names viz Ushvadata and Dakshmitra suggest that the Sakas had succumbed to Hindu influence.

Yaudheyas who dared to threaten him from the north; whereas he had secured his position in the south by defeating the Satavahana ruler of the Deccan. With the Satavahanas, Rudradaman had further cemented his relations by giving his daughter in marriage to Pulumavi Satkarni.

Rudradaman was evidently the greatest ruler of the Chastana line and extended his territory at the expense of the Andhras and ruled over Malwa, Surashtra, Kutch, Sind and north Konkan.

The rock inscription at Girnar (Junagadh) in Kathiawar is one of the most important inscriptions of ancient India. Its importance lies in the information it gives about

Rudradaman's victories over the Andhras and the Yaudheyas as also his other achievements. *The Girnar Inscription*
A.D. 150

The inscription mentions, among other things, the repairs done to the embankment of the Sudarshana lake, at a heavy cost, by the order of Rudradaman. It records that this lake was formed by throwing a dam across a mountain stream in the time of Chandragupta Maurya by Pushyagupta, the brother-in-law of the emperor and viceroy of western India. The work was completed in the reign of Asoka when Tushaspha, the Persian governor of the province, led out the first irrigation canal from the lake. The lake continued to serve its purpose for more than four hundred years when, about A.D. 150, heavy floods broke its embankment. It was then re-built by Rudradaman 'three times stronger than before' under the supervision of the governor, Suvisakha, who was a Pallava by descent. We learn further from the inscription that Rudradaman himself bore the entire expenses of its repairs and did not resort to the usual royal device of imposing additional taxation. The embankment seems afterwards to have been broken again, and again it had to be repaired after three hundred years by the Gupta sovereign Skandagupta.

A long line of Saka Satraps continued to rule over western India till the Ujjain dynasty was finally extirpated by Chandragupta II towards the close of the fifth century A.D.

SECTION III. THE KUSHANS

The Kushans were a Turki nomadic tribe of shepherds called the Yueh-chi or the Yakshas by the Chinese historians. They are described in Chinese literature as being big men with fair complexion and blue eyes *The Kushans* who were living in the Kan-Su province in north-western China. About 165 B.C. they were driven from their home-lands by another nomadic tribe called the Huns, and were

forced to seek new lands and pastures for themselves and their flocks of sheep. Marching along the edge of the Gobi desert, they came at length to the banks of the Jaxartes river and settled there. During the course of their settlement, the Yueh-chi came in conflict with the Sakas who had lived there for ages; but being more in number they succeeded in driving the Sakas away to the south. But the Yueh-chi, too, had no peace in their new home. They had hardly been twenty years in their new settlement when another nomadic tribe forced them to move on first to the valley of the Oxus, and then to Bactria. This event, probably, happened about 140 B.C.

With the occupation of Bactria by the Yueh-chi, the Greek rule may be said to have ended in that region. But the Greek

culture was not altogether destroyed. On the other hand, the nomadic conquerors of the Bactrian Greeks accepted the civilization and culture of the conquered and during the course of a hundred years gave up their old habits, lived a settled life and became civilised. One

important event that happened during this period was that one section of the Yueh-chi tribes, namely the Kushan section, under its resourceful leader Kajula Kadphises, brought the remaining clans under its sway and united them into one nation about A.D. 30. He was the first recognised ruler of all Yueh-chi tribes living in the Oxus valley and as he belonged to the Kushan clan, the term Yueh-chi was subsequently dropped in favour of the Kushan.

Kajula Kadphises, for convenience called Kadphises I, had a long and victorious career. Having imposed his authority

on his own people, he, too, like the Bactrian Greeks of old crossed over the Hindukush and occupied the Kabul valley and then extended his sway over Kandahar. Kadphises is believed

to have been the contemporary of the Indo-Parthian king, Gondopharnes. His advance across the Hindukush involved the final collapse of the Parthian and the Greek authority which was still lingering in this region.

A very large number of copper coins of Kadphises I have been discovered from which it appears that he was satisfied with his simple Turki title of 'Kajula-Kasa of the Kushan tribe,' and did not care to add any other expression of royal dignity.¹ He died at the ripe old age of eighty, in or about A.D. 78, leaving to his successor a kingdom which included the whole of the Oxus valley in the north and modern Afghanistan in the south.

Kajula was succeeded by his son, Wima Kadphises, who extended the authority of the Kushans still farther towards

¹These coins are bilingual having both Greek and Kharoshti scripts.

the east and south. His father had overthrown the Indo-Parthian and Greek rulers of Kohistan and he now further consolidated his authority over this region and then pushed his way to the Panjab where he subdued the Saka Satraps of Taxila. The presence of his coins as well as those of his governors all over northern India seems to indicate that even the Satrapal family ruling in the Mathura region was dislodged from its position of authority.

Kadphises II is said to have waged war even with the Chinese general, Pan Chao. The Chinese armies under this great general had extended their conquests as far as Khotan and Kashgar and thus gave Wima Kadphises occasion to come into conflict with them, since the conquests of these provinces exposed his expanding empire to a serious danger from this quarter. The Kushan armies were defeated and Wima Kadphises was compelled to pay tribute to the Chinese emperor.

The relations of Kadphises II with the Roman emperors were more fortunate. His political embassy to the court of the emperor Trojan was received with befitting honour and contributed to the further development of commercial relations between the two countries.

Wima Kadphises, as his coins reveal, used the royal titles which his father did not. His coins both in gold and copper are beautiful pieces and give him a string of high-sounding titles: Maharaja, king of kings (Shahan-Shah), the Lord of all people, the Great Lord, etc. The coins further reveal that he had adopted Hinduism, for they have, on their reverse, the figure of Shiva and his favourite bull, Nandi, and the epithet of the King as Maheshvara.

Wima Kadphises was succeeded by Kanishka although the exact relationship of the latter with the former is not known.¹ He was, indeed, the most powerful of the Kushan kings and under him, the Kushan power reached its widest limits. His name is famous in the tales and legends of the Mongolian world, and according to these he conquered the whole of Northern India including Kashmir and Magadha. To the Buddhists, Kanishka was as great a figure as Asoka since he did as much for the spread of the Mahayana School of Buddhism as the great Mauryan emperor had done for the cause of the Hinayana School.

¹The chronology of the Kushan kings is still a matter of doubt and uncertainty. Much controversy has been going on over the date of Kanishka. According to one theory, the year of his accession was A.D. 78 while according to the other he is believed to have come to the throne in 125. Even other improbable dates such as 58 B.C., A.D. 248 and A.D. 278 have also been suggested.

The Kushan empire under Kadphises II had extended on both sides of the Hindukush and the Suleman ranges. The government of his Indian possessions, however, was left by Kadphises in the hands of his governors. When Kanishka came to the throne he transferred his seat of government to Peshawar. Here he built, in honour of Buddha, a great wooden tower about 400 feet high, and also a monastery which continued to exist as late as the 11th century A.D.¹

Having made Peshawar his capital, Kanishka embarked upon a career of military conquests, and during a period of a quarter of century made extensive conquests in India, Kashmir and Turkestan. In northern India, he came into conflict with the Saka Satraps ruling in the Panjab and Mathura and completely shattered whatever remained of their power in these regions. He is also believed to have extended his conquests, as far as Pataliputra in the east and, according to a Chinese author, "he accepted the Buddhist saint Ashvaghosha, as a gift from the defeated king of Pataliputra." Indeed, several inscriptions referring to Kanishka and his dynasty have been

His Conquests discovered at Mathura and one at Sarnath (Benares) which support the traditional account that his empire extended over a considerable part of northern India.

Not satisfied with his conquests in the basins of the Indus, Jumna and Ganges, this ambitious monarch next projected his invasion southwards and waged successful wars against the Saka Satraps of Malwa and Gujarat.

Kanishka is also said to have added Kashmir to his Indian dominions, and raised many monuments at several places in the valley. Close to Srinagar, the modern capital of Kashmir, Kanishka founded a town which though now only a village (Kanispur), by the side of the Baramula road, still bears his name.

But the most brilliant of his military feats was the conquest of Khotan, Kashgar and Yarkand which involved the extremely difficult task of conveying a large expeditionary force across the Pamirs, called the 'roof of the world.' These provinces, as we have said before, were seized by the Chinese general, Pan Chao, in the previous reign. Kanishka was thus able to avenge the defeat suffered by the Kushan arms in the reign of Kadphises II and to take back hostages from the Chinese empire.²

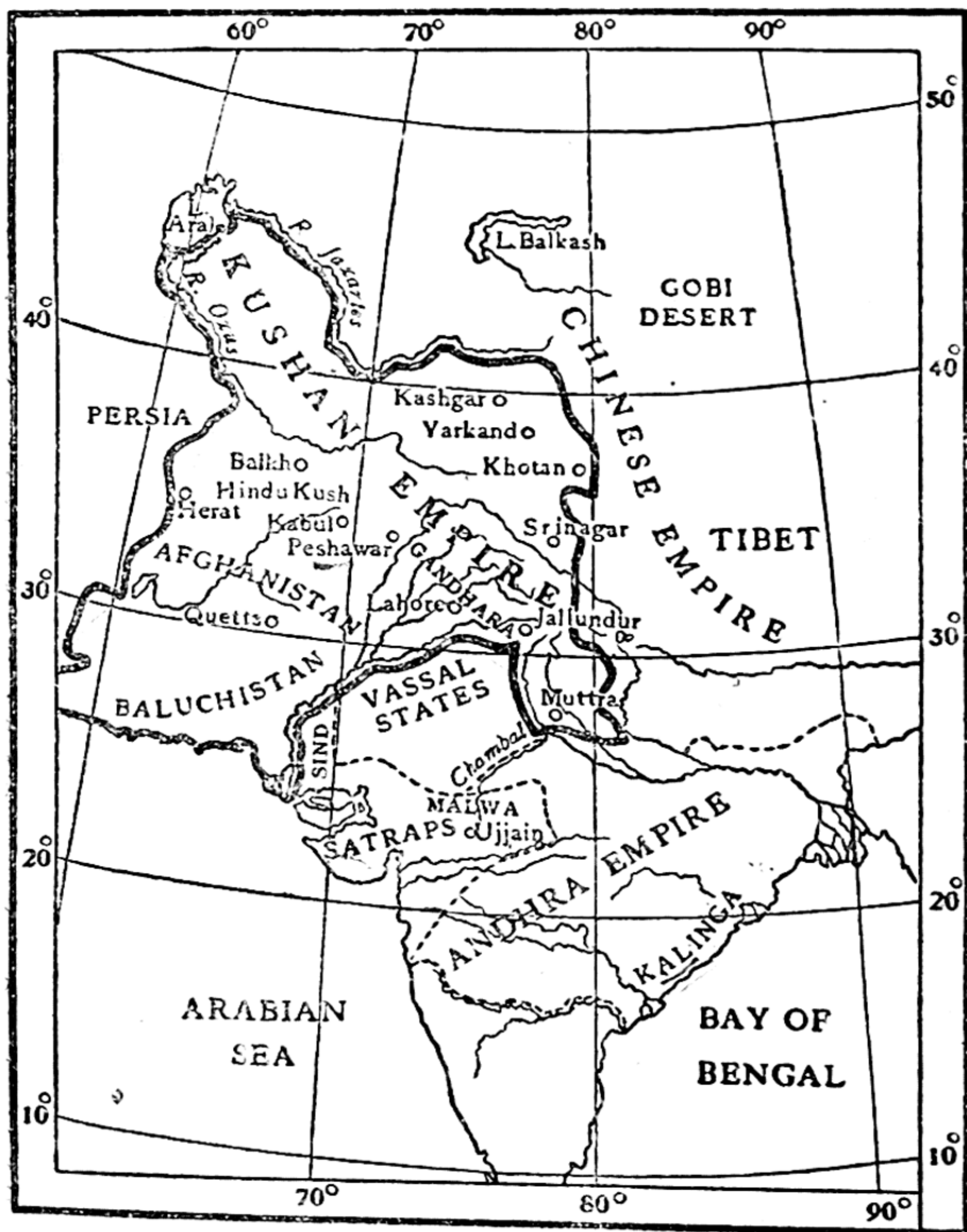
The story of Kanishka's death seems to show that, for the most part of his reign, he was almost always engaged in war-

¹Alberuni also mentions that the Peshawar monastery was built by Kanishka and was called after him, Kanika-Chaitya.

²These hostages are said to have brought into India the pear and the peach, fruits unknown to the country before Kanishka's time.

fare and that all the officers and men of the army were tired of such conditions. The story goes that one day, when Kanishka was ill, his men covered him up with a quilt and one of them sat on the top of it and strangled him to death.

His death
A.D. 144



THE KUSHAN EMPIRE

Kanishka is said to have reigned for twenty-four years and if we take the year 120 as the date of his accession, the date of his death should be 144, or A.D. 145. Some historians assign him a much longer period of rule.

The Kushan empire, in its widest limits, extended from

Bokhara to Sind and from Persia to Benares. It included Kashmir and the provinces of Yarkand Kashgar and Khotan beyond the Pamirs which brought its frontiers in close proximity to the Chinese empire. Within India Kanishka's empire included Panjab, Sind, Bahawalpur and United provinces of Agra and Oudh. On its western frontiers, the empire of the Kushans ran conterminous with the Parthian empire, whose limits in its turn touched those of the Roman empire. Thus, the frontiers of the greatest empires of the age—the Roman, the Parthian, the Kushan and the Chinese touched one another, and afforded a great stimulus to the revival of trade and commerce between the East and the West.

Kanishka's coins and his religion as revealed by them A large variety of Kanishka's coins, both in gold and copper, have been discovered and the king himself is depicted as sacrificing at an altar, more especially on his copper coins. Some of these have figures of Greek gods on them and bear letters in the Greek alphabet. There are others which have old Iranian (Persian) letters with images of Greek, Persian, and even Indian gods. Some rare pieces of gold coins bear the image of Buddha which indicates that either Buddha played a very insignificant part in the coinage scheme of Kanishka or that he adopted Buddhism late in life. Thus the portraits of deities and religious symbols on the coins of Kushan Kings seem to show that these people combined three distinct civilizations and cultures viz. Greek, Persian and Indian. One other feature worthy of notice in Kanishka's coins is the complete absence of the Kharoshti script although the coins of his predecessor bore bilingual legends in Greek and Kharoshti letters. For his inscriptions, however, Kanishka seems to have favoured the use of the Kharoshti script.

System of Government We have scarcely any source from which we could know how Kanishka used to govern such a vast empire. The only available record is the well-known Sarnath inscription dated in the 3rd year of Kanishka's reign which throws some light on the administrative organization of the empire. We learn from this inscription that the eastern province of Benares (Sarnath) was governed by an officer who was styled as Kshatrapa and the bigger division of Mathura by an officer styled Maha Kshatrapa. It seems reasonable to infer that the empire was divided into a number of administrative units big or small and placed under Satraps or governors.

Kanishka, like Asoka, was a great builder. He is credited with having built a large number of monuments in Kashmir where he also founded a town Kanishkpura.

In his capital at Peshawar, he erected a huge stupa and a monastery in which he placed the the relics of Buddha.¹ The Sir Sukh section of the ruins at Taxila has also revealed the remains of a city built by Kanishka. The famous Gandhara School of Sculpture also arose in his times. Excavations at Mat in the Mathura district have disclosed a life-size statue of Kanishka though it is now, unfortunately, without a head. The name and titles of Kanishka are inscribed on his skirt.

*Kanishka's
buildings and
his patronage of
art & literature*

Kanishka was also a great patron of letters and his name is associated with a number of famous Indian scholars and scientists. Great Buddhist savants and scholars like Ashva-ghosha, Vasumitra and Nagarjuna adorned his imperial court. Again, Charaka, the celebrated authority on the Indian system of medicine, lived at his court and is said to have been the king's court physician.))

To the Buddhists, Kanishka was as great a figure as Asoka and his memory is fondly cherished by them, more especially by those who belong to the Mahayana school of thought. Like Asoka, the Kushan emperor built a number of stupas and monasteries for the residence of the monks and liberally endowed these residential churches. In fact, the country of Gandhara under Kanishka, like Bihar under Asoka, became a land of monasteries. Like Asoka, again, he is said to have summoned a special conference of learned scholars to settle the disputed points of the Buddhist creed. But the parallel drawn between the careers of the two Buddhist monarchs must end here; for, we find that the great Kushan King did not abjure war or conquest at any stage of his career as was done by the Mauryan monarch after his acceptance of the pacific creed of the Sage of the Sakyas.

*Kanishka and
Asoka—their
services to
Buddhism*

The great Buddhist Council convened in the time of Kanishka was held in Kashmir—although some scholars believe that the meeting place was Jullundur—and as many as five hundred delegates from various Buddhist schools attended and took part in the deliberations. The entire scriptural literature of the Buddhists was thoroughly examined and exhaustive commentaries were prepared. Tradition has it that these commentaries were inscribed on copper plates which were buried in a stupa specially built for the purpose. The conference was

¹The ruins of this mound were excavated in 1908 when a beautiful relic-casket was dug out as one of the finds. The casket contained relics of Buddha and the inscription on it records that the stupa was designed and built by a Greek architect named Agisala (Agesilaus). These relics are now preserved in a Buddhist shrine in Burma.

presided over by the aged Ashvaghosha who was assisted by the learned savant Vasumitra.¹ The council marked the close of a period of quarrels between the different sects of Buddhism; but it did not prevent the rise of the new school called Mahayanism.

Thus, the active patronage of Kanishka must have given a renewed stimulus to the spread of Buddhism in the countries beyond India proper which were included in the empire of the Kushans. In fact, the northward movement of Buddhism really began in the time of Kaniska.

The period which saw the extension of Buddhism also witnessed the most serious dissension within the bosom of the church. Discussions, schisms and divisions

*Mahayana
Buddhism*

among the monks regarding the observance of certain practices, rules of conduct and rituals had been going on for several generations, but a change in the fundamental doctrines of the religion was never so manifest before as now. This change or more exactly the transformation of the creed came about only with the growth of Mahayanism and it permanently divided the Buddhist church into two big camps.

This new form of Buddhism was an amalgam of old Buddhism, Hinduism and the religious beliefs of the Greeks, the Parthians and other Central Asian pagan tribes. When and under what circumstances, this change came about cannot be ascertained with precision. Certain facts of the social and political history of the times, however, do help us in understanding how this change in the religion of Sakya Muni Gautam did creep in. The first important fact which is worthy of notice in this connection

*Causes of
Transformation*

is that the new school of Buddhism had its origin and development in the Panjab and the north-west of India. This part of the country, as we have seen before, was overrun and occupied by hordes of invaders—Greeks, Parthians and Scythians—for hundreds of years since *circa* 250 B.C. They brought with them many new customs and beliefs and continued to observe some of these even after they had given up their own religion and had adopted Buddhism. The most important of these was the practice of making images of the deities whom they used to worship. This was specially true of the Greeks. And now that they adopted Buddhism they began to make images of the Buddha. This was, indeed a revolutionary change. But the Buddhists of the old School failed to stop this and other changes. In the first place, Pataliputra, the centre of orthodox Buddhism, was far away from Gandhara where these changes were taking place.

¹This great sanskrit scholar is the author of the Mahavibhasha, an encyclopædia of Buddhist philosophy which still exists in its Chinese translation.

Secondly, with the collapse of the Imperial Mauryan authority, Pataliputra itself had lost its political prestige and so also did the central Buddhist monastery suffer considerably in dignity. Its commands were no longer taken with awe or carried out with respect by subordinate monasteries in other parts of the country. The Gandhara monasteries, therefore, did let these radical changes creep in with impunity. *free from punishment* *free*

Another reason that may be assigned for the introduction of image worship into the Buddhist church was the exposition and the preaching of the Hindu doctrine of Bhakti or devotion, which was becoming popular at the time. The Bhakti cult enjoined upon its follower a deep and single-minded devotion to the object of his worship and inspired the devotee with feelings of intense warmth and emotion. And this is what would appeal to an average man. The old orthodox Buddhism, on the other hand, laid stress on the practical and moral conduct of man—such as truthfulness, charity and non-injury to others. There was no place for emotion, sentiments of love and prayers in the Buddhist creed. Now that the Bhakti cult supplied the idea of a godhead or an object of worship, the lay followers of the Buddha accepted it and began to make his images and use them as visible objects of worship.

There is yet another and apparently a plausible reason urged by Mr. E. B. Havell in this connection. He observes that since the days of Asoka, the practice of building monasteries and erecting stupas over the relics of Buddha had become common in the Buddhist church. These relic monuments served as constant reminders to the resident monks of the glory of their Lord. And now, that the practice of making images of gods had been introduced in the country by the Greeks, the Buddhist monks, too, were naturally prone to adopt the same, especially because an image was a more visible symbol and a better reminder of the Master than any of his buried relics.

Some of the teachings of the new school (Mahayanism) differed in their very fundamentals from those of the old or the Hinayana school. According to the old school, a man *himself* had to strive for his salvation. *Teachings of the new School* He must make *himself* holy. He should not pray to God or gods or depend upon Him for deliverance from sin. As for himself, the Buddha had told his followers that when he died he would pass into Nirvana and that in this state of calm repose 'he would see nothing, hear nothing, feel nothing.' They need not, therefore, offer prayers to him. But the followers of the new school acted quite to the contrary. They raised him to the position of a god and began to worship him as such. His images were made and placed in the churches and prayers for salvation and forgiveness of sins were offered to him as if he could hear and

answer those prayers. Again, it is not the Buddha alone that the people worshipped and prayed to; they also began to offer worship and prayers to the Boddhisatvas—*viz.* the holy saints who had departed this life and were in the process of obtaining, but had not yet obtained, Buddhahood. Thus, the doctrine of Boddhisatvas led to a new belief, a belief that every one might aim at, or even rise to the Buddhahood for helping or assisting men in obtaining salvation. This was another radical change in the creed, for we know that Buddha had told his followers that every one had to strive for his or her salvation unaided and without the assistance of a god or saint.

There is yet another feature of the new school which is worthy of notice. It is the substitution of Sanskrit for Pali as the

Adoption of Sanskrit for Pali language of the canon. The commentaries which were prepared as the result of the deliberations of the special conference held in Kashmir were also composed in Sanskrit. Nagarjuna, who is believed to be the greatest apostle of the Mahayana school was a great scholar of Sanskrit. The works of Ashvaghosha as well as those of Vasumitra were also composed in the learned language of the Brahmins whereas the earlier works of the Hinayana school were mostly in the Pali language.

There are certain inscriptions which mention the name of Vāsishka as the son of Kanishka. He ruled, as his father's

Successors of Kanishka viceroy, in Mathura but the absence of any coins bearing his inscription seems to suggest that he died during the life time of his father and did not succeed him as sovereign. Huvishka, who

succeeded Kanishka on the throne, was, probably, his second son. His coins, which are both extensive and of numerous types, suggest a long period of rule of about fifty years (145-195). A.D. Like his father he had had an eclectic taste in religion and his coins reveal a medley of Greek, Iranian and Indian deities. Like his father, again, Huvishka was also a great builder. He built a Buddhist monastery and a temple at Mathura and founded a town in Kashmir, Huvishkpura, named after him. This still survives as a small village called Hushkpura.

Huvishka was succeeded by Vasudeva whose records range over a period of more than thirty years. The Hindu form of his name shows how fast the Kushans were being assimilated by Hinduism. This is also attested by his coins, all or almost all of which bear the portrait of god Siva with his bull on their reverse.

Decline of the Kushan power Vasudeva was the last of the notable rulers of the Kushan dynasty. It is probable that even in the times of Vasudeva much of the trans-Indian territory was lost to the Kushans. On his death the

empire broke up into numerous little states which existed down to the middle of the fourth century A.D. as is evidenced by the coins of the rulers of these petty dynasties. The Vasudeva line continued to rule for some generations in and around Mathura when it was considerably weakened by the attacks of the Nagas and was finally swept away before the advance of the Guptas. The Satraps, who governed in western India as vassals of the great Kushans, became independent after Vasudeva. The Kushan branch also known as Kidara Kushans which ruled in Afghanistan was overthrown by the Huns, in the fifth century A.D.¹

At the time that the Kushan empire broke up in the north-west of India, the Andhra empire broke up in the south and east and the Araskidan dynasty came to an end in Persia or Parthia. Whether this collapse of the three great empires was a mere coincidence or that these events had anything to do with one another we cannot now tell.

It has been already remarked that the frontiers of the Kushan empire touched those of the three greatest empires of the age namely China, Parthia and Rome. One important development that followed the establishment of this contact was the revival of trade and commerce between India and China on one side and between India and the Western countries on the other. The land routes connecting China and India were made available by the conquest of Kashmir and Turkistan by Kanishka; whereas those to Persia and Syria through the north-west were already in use since the days of Alexander and Seleucus.

*Results of
foreign
contacts*

Regarding the sea-borne trade, we have ample evidence that it flowed through two channels namely the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. The city of Alexandria, under its Greek rulers (the Ptolemies) had developed into a great centre of Mediterranean commerce. Indian goods were carried through the Red Sea to ports on the Egyptian coast and transported across the intervening desert to the Nile down which they were taken to Alexandria. Near one of the ancient ports of the Red Sea there has been discovered an inscription which records the visit of an Indian named Sophan and in Bangalore (Madras) there was discovered a silver coin of one of the Ptolemy kings of Egypt which facts establish beyond doubt the communications between India and Egypt.

*India and the
western world*

In course of time India also developed political and commercial relations with the Imperial Rome. More than one political ambassador of the Kushan kings went to Rome. We learn

¹Traces of the survival of the Kidara Kushans in Afghanistan are found as late as the middle of the 9th century A.D.

from the Roman writers that Indian silks, spices, pearls and other articles of eastern luxury were in great demand by the Roman nobility. In payment of those articles, quantities of Roman gold coins poured into India so much so that a Roman writer, Pliny, in a patriotic vein laments the flow of gold from his country to India. This is corroborated by the extensive finds of Roman gold and silver coins in several parts of Southern India.

The sea-borne trade, it appears, was not confined to the countries of the west alone. It was also carried to the Malayan group of islands in the east. The Hindu settlements of Java and Champa were established about this time.

NOTES

BACTRIAN GREEKS 190-50 B.C.

After the decline of the Mauryan power, the provinces of Afghanistan and the Panjab were over-run and occupied by the Bactrian Greeks. The first of these invaders was Demetrios who established his authority in these regions in 190 B.C. His continued absence from Bactria resulted in the expulsion of his family from that country where another adventurer, Eucratides by name, seized the throne in 175 B.C. He was, in his turn driven from Bactria by the Sakas. Eucratides then advanced into Kabul and the Panjab pushing Demetrios farther east. The Panjab thus came to be divided into two: east of the Jhelum river formed the kingdom of Demetrios' family and the west of that river upto the limits of the Hindukush was ruled by the house of Eucratides. The Greek rule survived in these regions for a little over one century.

The one Greek ruler who has left a name in Indian literature is Menander or Milinda of the Buddhist tradition.

The political contact brought about also cultural contacts between the Greeks and the Indians. For a fuller treatment of this subject see the text under the heading: Greek influence on Indian art, science religion and social life etc. The Gandhara school of sculptural art is the best surviving monument of the result of this cultural contact.

The Sakas and the Parthians. The province of Parthia developed into a powerful empire in course of time. Its limits reached almost the limits of the old Persian kingdom of Darius both in the west and in the east. In circa 88 B.C., however, with the death of Mithridates II the empire began to exhibit signs of weakness on its eastern side, viz. in the provinces of Ariana, Sistan, Kandahar, Afghanistan and north-west India.

It was about this time that the Saka chieftains asserted their authority in these regions and the Parthian emperors, by way of compromise, associated them in the administration of the country. It were these Saka or Scythian Chiefs and not the Parthian emperors who later on invaded the Panjab and eventually pushed out the Bactrians. Of the most important names of the Indo-Scythian rulers are those of Maues, and Azes I, who ruled in Taxila and the Gandhara regions.

There was yet another family of the Saka chieftains who were able

to establish their political power in the regions of Mathura and like their brethren of the Panjab continued to rule in this region till all of them, viz., the Panjab and Mathura Satraps were swept away by the Kushans.

Besides the Saka chieftains of the Panjab and Mathura, there were other Saka ruling families in Gujarat and Malwa. These western kingdoms of the Sakas were destined to persist much longer than those in northern India. They had a regular see-saw of struggle with the Andhra kings of the Deccan for a long time, survived that struggle but later succumbed to a more powerful attack of the Imperial Guptas (A.D. 375-414)

The most important name among the western Saka satraps is that of Rudradaman. The Saka patronage of Indian art and culture is worthy of notice. The Sakas like the Kushans had come under the influence of Indian religion and culture. Their names became Hinduised as time went on (Rudradaman, Satyasingha whereas the earlier names were Maues, Gondopharnes, etc.), they used Sanskrit in their inscriptions and epigraphical records and Rudradaman even entered into matrimonial relation with the Andhra king Pulumavi.

The Kushans. The Greek rule in Bactria, Kabul, and the Panjab was overthrown by the Sakas and the Sakas in their turn were swallowed up by the Kushans. The most important of the Kushan kings was Kanishka, who made Peshawar his capital and then extended his conquest as far as Benares in the east, Turkistan in the north, and Malwa and Gujarat in the south-west.

This vast empire of the Kushans proved a great civilizing factor: trade and commerce flowed between China, India, Persia, Mesopotamia and the Roman empire; the Kushan ambassadors were despatched to the court of the great Roman emperors; the Buddhist missionaries carried the torch of Indian culture to Turkistan, Tibet, and other Mongolian countries; the Greek artists were employed by the Kushan kings to give new style, technique and finish to the sculptural art in the country; the religion of Sakya Muni Gautam was almost entirely transformed when it was accepted by these foreigners.

The Kushans, like the Sakas, appear to have been highly adaptable. When they settled down in India they conformed to their new environments. They gave up their old names like Kadphises and adopted purely Hindu names as Vasudeva; gave up their pagan beliefs and adopted Buddhism or Hinduism; even on their coins they had the figures of Hindu gods.

Nearly this book is very good

QUESTIONS

1. Who were the Bactrians? How did they come to occupy the Panjab and north-west India and for how long did they maintain their rule in this region?
2. Write notes on: Antiochos III, Demetrios, Eucratides, and Menander.
3. In what way and to what extent, if any, did the Greek and Indian cultures exercise influence on each another?
4. Write a note on the Gandhara art of sculpture.
5. Who were the Sakas and in what parts of India did they establish their rule?

6. Write notes on: Azes I, Chastana and Rudradaman.
7. Give an account of Kanishka mentioning in particular, his conquests and the extent of his empire with the aid of a map.
8. Compare Kanishka and Asoka as patrons of Buddhism.
9. What do you understand by the Hinayana and Mahayana schools of Buddhism? How was this change brought about? Mention some of the important differences in the teachings of the two schools.
10. "Under Kanishka, the frontiers of the greatest empires of the age viz: the Roman, the Parthian, the Chinese and the Kushan touched one another". What was the result of this contact?

KINGS OF FOREIGN DYNASTIES IN INDIA 190 B.C.—A.D. 390.

The chronology of some of these kings is still unsettled. The names of only important kings are given in this chart.

SERIAL No.	NAMES.	Approximate Dates.	REMARKS.
(A)	Bactrian Greeks	190-50 B.C.	
1.	Euthydemus	.....	Ruler of Bactria, conquered the valleys of Kabul and Indus.
2.	Demetrios	.....	Son of No. 1—was married to the daughter of Antiochos III of Syria, established his seat of authority in the Panjab.
3.	Menander	.....	The famous Yavana king Milinda of the Buddhist literature. His capital was at Sakala (Sialkot).
1.	Eucratides and his successors	175-25 B.C.	He drove out Demetrios from Bactria and usurped the throne. He next advanced into the Kabul valley and pushed out the rival house of Demetrios. His successors seized Taxila and made it their headquarters. The Demetrios family was driven across the Jhelum.
(B)	Indo-Scythians	75 B.C.-A.D. 19	
1.	Maues	75-58 B.C.	First king of the dynasty who ruled over the Panjab with headquarters at Taxila.
2.	Azes I		He is regarded as the founder of the era popularly known as Vikrama era (58 B.C.).

SERIAL No.	NAME.	Approximate Date.	REMARKS.
(C)	Indo-Parthians Gondopharnes	A.D. 19-45.	The Christian Saint, St. Thomas, is said to have visited his court at Taxila. This dynasty was overthrown by the Kushans.
(D)	Saka Satraps	72 B.C.-A.D. 390	Associated with the Parthian kings (B. above); were the Satraps whose coins and inscriptions have been found in N.-W. India, Mathura and Western India and Malwa.
1.	Laika Kusuka	72-30 B.C.	They ruled over districts about Taxila. Their names are mentioned in the copper-plate inscriptions discovered at Taxila and belonging to the reign of Maues. They were overthrown by the Kushans.
2.	Patika Kusuka	72-30 B.C.	
1.	Mahakashtrapa Rajula	30 B.C.	They ruled over the Mathura region. Their names are found inscribed on the Mathura Lion capital dated circa 30-25 B.C. They were overthrown by the Kushan King, Kanishka.
2.	Kshatrapa Sudasa	.....
1.	Bhumaka.	A.D. 78-124.	This family ruled in Surashtra and Maharashtra. The greatest ruler of this dynasty was No. 2, who maintained his position against the Andhras. Their power was weakened by Gautamiputra Satkarni (A.D. 108-128) and ultimately reduced to vassalage by the Kushans.
2.	Nahapana and his successors	.....
1.	Chastana.	A.D. 78-110	No. 1, founded his dynasty on the ruins of the Bhumaka family. He made Ujjain as his headquarters. No. 2, was the grandson of No. 1. He and his successors waged wars against the Andhras whom they defeated. The last of the
2.	Rudradaman and his successors	A.D. 120-150	

SERIAL No.	NAME.	Approximate Dates.	REMARKS.
			line was overthrown by Chandragupta Vikramaditya. A.D. 390
(E)	The Kushans		The Bhumaka family as well as the Chashtana family had ultimately accepted Hinduism and were great patrons of Indian art and literature.
1.	Kadphises Kajula	A.D. 25-78	Founder of the Kushan dynasty in Bactria. Extended his conquests in Afghanistan by driving out the Bactrian Greeks.
2.	Wima Kadphises.	A.D. 78-120	Son of No. 1. Extended his conquest still further eastwards.
3.	Kanishka	A.D. 120-144	Relationship with No. 2, not known. Greatest ruler of the Kushan dynasty. Great patron of Buddhism. Capital at Peshawar.
4.	Vashishka	.....	Son of No. 3. probably died during the life time of his father.
5.	Huvishka	A.D. 168-197	Probably brother of No. 4. (The Kushan possessions in Mathura were seized by the Nava Naga kings in his time.)
6.	Vasudeva	A.D. 197-227	Worshipper of God Siva. With him, the dynasty came to an end.
			*NOTE: Some scholars give A.D. 78 as the year of Kanishka's accession to the throne.

CHAPTER IX.

Indo-Aryan Revival A.D. 200—500

SECTION I. THE NAGAS AND THE VAKATAKAS A.D. 200—350

When the Kushan empire in the north-west and the Andhra empire in the south-east broke up, India was again split up into small kingdoms. But this state of affairs did not last long. Of the dynasties that had set up their rule during this period, two rose to great eminence and were destined to play an important part in the political and cultural history of the country. These were the Nagas and the Vakatakas¹

Of the earlier history of the Nagas we have no precise information. But a definite mention of the Naga princes is made by the Puranas which state that toward the close of the Sunga rule, the Nagas lived and ruled *Earlier Nagas* at Vidisa (modern Gwalior State). Soon after, however, the advance of the Sakas and then of the Kushans, probably, forced the Naga chieftains to move southward and seek shelter in the comparatively securer regions beyond the Vindhya, and it was here that they built their headquarters at Nagpur. During the period of foreign domination of about two centuries, the Nagas lived in peace in this region and seemed to have conserved their energy for use at some future time.

The opportunity came with the collapse of the Kushans. One of the Naga princes, known as Nava Naga, came into prominence at this time. Having fully consolidated his power in the home country, he marched *Nava Nagas and the* northward against the Kushans and opened *foreigners* a struggle which continued for the remaining thirty years of his life. Nava Naga bequeathed his throne to Virasena and with this bequest of his royal power he also passed on to his successor the heritage of war against the foreigners. Virasena proved a great patriot, soldier and statesman. He organised the struggle against the foreigners on broader lines and invited other Indian princes to join him and ultimately succeeded in driving out the Kushans from Mathura and the Doab, and in re-establishing Hindu rule in Bundelkhand, Baghelkhand, and the Gangetic valley. Virasena reigned for

¹Little was known about these dynasties before Mr. K. P. Jayaswal, recently published the result of his researches in his *History of India A.D. 150-350 Naga-Vakataka Imperial Period*.

about forty years. His line of kings is also known as the Bharsivas. The study of their coins reveals that four kings succeeded Virasena till we come to the last of this line named Maharaja Bhava Naga.

Bhava Naga (circa A.D. 300), was probably the last of his line. A daughter of his was married to Gautamiputra, son of Pravarsena I, the Vakataka king. After his death, the Naga empire was inherited by Rudrasena Vakataka, the son of Gautamiputra and his Naga consort. Thus the Vakataka and the Naga kingdoms became merged into the Vakataka empire.

All the Bharsiva Naga kings were great warriors. In their political views all seem to have been guided by one supreme motive namely the revival of indigenous Hindu rule in the country. In their religious beliefs they were worshippers of the Shiva cult and must get credit not only for reviving indigenous Hindu rule in the country but also for reviving the old vedic rites and the study of Sanskrit language and literature. The patriotic movements initiated by the Nagas gained further momentum under the Vakatakas and the Guptas. The introduction of the Devanagiri script in which Sanskrit and Hindi languages are today written, was also due to these Naga kings.))

The early history of the Vakatakas like that of the Nagas is obscure. According to an inscription in one of the Ajanta

caves, the founder of the dynasty was one Vindhyasakti, a Brahmin by caste.¹ He planted his power in Kilakali in the Bundelkhand region.

In the Ajanta cave inscription, Vindhyaasakti is mentioned without a title, whereas his son Pravarsena I is mentioned as *Smrat* (emperor), and is said to have performed horse-sacrifice. Pravarsena's period of rule is estimated at 60 years, from A.D. 284 to 344.² He was a strong and resourceful ruler who further strengthened his position by making a matrimonial alliance with the powerful Naga king of Narwar by taking the daughter of Maharaja Bhava Naga as the bride for his son, Gautamiputra.

Gautamiputra died during the life time of his father. His son, Rudrasena I (A.D. 344-348) then succeeded to the Vakataka throne. He had also, as mentioned before, inherited the kingdom of Maharaja Bhava Naga on his mother's side. The two kingdoms of Central and Northern India were thus united under Rudrasena Vakataka.

¹Like the Sungas and the Satavahanas, the Vakatakas too had exchanged the Sastras for the sword.

²These dates are based on Mr. K. P. Jayaswal's History of India A.D. 150-350 Naga-Vakataka Imperial period.

Rudrasena came in conflict with Maharaja Samudragupta of Magadha and was compelled to yield to his more powerful adversary. But this discomfiture did not materially affect either his territory or his revenue, as both continued to increase under his son and successor Prithvisena I. Prithvisena ruled for quarter of a century (A.D. 348-375), and was contemporary of the great Gupta monarch Samudragupta. He extended his kingdom south-westwards across the Deccan by conquering the country of Kuntala (northern part of Karnataka).

Prithvisena's successor was Rudrasena II (A.D. 375-395). The strategic position of the Vakataka kingdom corresponding to modern Berar was such that the Gupta sovereign thought it prudent to further strengthen the bonds of friendship with its ruler. Chandragupta Vikramaditya, therefore, before launching his campaign against the Saka Satraps of Malwa gave his daughter in marriage to Rudrasena. But the alliance affected the prestige of the Vakatakas rather adversely, as Rudrasena came definitely under the influence of the Guptas. The Vakatakas were, thus, eclipsed by the Guptas for the time being and were able to reassert themselves only when the Gupta overlordship ended with the demise of Skandagupta in A.D. 468.

After Rudrasena's death, his Gupta consort (Prabhavatigupta) ruled over the kingdom for twenty years as regent for her minor son, Devakarasena. Devakarasena, on coming of age adopted the name of Pravarsena II (A.D. 415-435). He was contemporary of Kumargupta I with whom his relations continued to be amiable. Amongst the later rulers of the Vakataka family, the names of Devasena and Harisena are prominent. The last was ruling at the time when the Huns under Tormana (A.D. 468-502) were wresting the western provinces of the Gupta empire. He turned this political confusion to his own advantage and asserted his supremacy over Avanti, Kalinga, Trikuta and Andhra. After Harisena, however, there set in a definite decline in the fortunes of the Vakatakas.

From a brief account given above, it may be inferred that the Vakatakas had established a strong political and military power in the country before the imperial Guptas rose to prominence, and that they were able to maintain their position even when the Guptas had spread their sway over the northern, central and western India. They held, in fact, a dominantly important position in the centre of the country with the Gupta empire on their north and a number of equally powerful kingdoms on their south.

During the earlier phase of their history, the Vakatakas had helped the Nagas in demolishing the domination of the

*The Vakatakas
and the Guptas*

*Later
Vakatakas*

*Their contribu-
tion to Hindu-
ism*

foreigners like the Sakas and the Kushans. Their aim like that of the Nagas seems to have been the establishment of Hindu sovereignty in the whole country. And it was this noble heritage, again, which they had bequeathed to the Guptas who, in turn, succeeded in sweeping away the last vestiges of the foreign rule from western India. With the ideal of the revival of political power, the Vakatakas also combined the lofty ideal of reviving Hindu religion, Hindu culture and Sanskrit language; all of which had suffered a serious set back since the days of Asoka. The restoration of political power under the Vakatakas supplied a strong stimulus, as it were, and the entire country began to pulsate with new life. Under the patronage of the Vakataka kings, the seeds of religious, social and literary revival were freely and widely scattered in the country and bore a bumper crop under the rule of the benign Guptas. It was through the Vakatakas that the culture of northern India began to penetrate into the south. Pravarasena II himself is credited with the authorship of the famous poetical work called *Setu-bandha*. It is not unlikely that he imbibed this love of poetry by his constant association with Kalidasa and other great poets who graced the court of his maternal grandfather, Chandra-gupta Vikramaditya.

Similarly, the credit for the revival of Hindu art like that of Sanskrit literature, should really go to the Vakatakas. The Ajanta caves were the work of the Vakatakas rather than that of the Guptas, as direct Gupta rule never reached Ajanta, which region continued to remain throughout in Vakataka possession.))

SECTION II. THE GUPTA EMPIRE A.D. 320—500.

The task of building up an All-India Hindu empire begun by the Nagas and continued by the Vakatakas was completed

Early history of the Guptas by the Guptas. The origin and early history of the Guptas like those of their predecessors, the Nagas and the Vakatakas are lost in obs-

curity. It is surmised that the Guptas originally lived in the Pānjab and some of them who got into service under the Saka rulers went to the United Provinces and Bihar in their official capacity and became domiciled inhabitants in those parts of the country. Later, when the Saka rulers were dislodged from their power by the Nagas, these Indian officials were permitted to remain in possession of their jagirs and estates. One of these families was the family of Shrigupta. Shrigupta is mentioned by the Chinese traveller, I-Tsing, as ruling in Magadha as early as the second century A.D.¹ How big this kingdom of Magadha

¹After the Mauryans, Magadha passed into the hands of the Sungas and then to the Kanvas 72 B.C. The Kanvas were overthrown by the Andhras. The Andhras were ousted from the Gangetic region by the Sakas and the Kushans and these, in their turn, by the Nava Naga Virasena.

I-Tsing came to India in the seventh century, A.D.

then was, we have no means to ascertain. He was succeeded by his son, Ghatotkacha, and the latter by his son, Chandragupta I, the founder of the Gupta empire.

How Chandragupta came to occupy an eminent position as the Maharajadhiraja, and how he managed to build up an empire cannot be precisely determined. He was, without doubt, a brave soldier and resourceful man. He entered into matrimonial alliance with the warrior clan of the Lichchavis

Chandragupta I
A.D. 320—335

and made use of their resources in his task of empire building. This presumption is based on the fact that Chandragupta's coins bear the portrait of his wife, Kumaradevi, as well his own, with a legend that pointedly mentions Kumaradevi as a princess of the Lichchavi clan. Even Chandragupta's son and successor Samudragupta continued to take pride in calling himself "Lichhavidauhitrā" or the son of the daughter of the Lichchavis.¹ It was with the help of the Lichchavis that he seized Pataliputra from Sundarvarman Kota¹ and then subdued the neighbouring princes. But this usurpation eventually turned the people of Magadha against him and Chandragupta was forced to abandon Pataliputra and retire to Ayodhya which region he subdued and brought under him. Before he died his authority extended over Oudh, and Tirhut.

To commemorate the establishment of his empire, Chandragupta is said to have founded an era called the Gupta era, which corresponds roughly to the year A.D. 320.

The real builder of the empire was Chandragupta's son, Samudragupta who succeeded his father in A.D. 335. It appears from the Allahabad inscription that Samudragupta was not the eldest son of his father but was chosen by Chandragupta from among his sons as the best fitted to succeed him. That the choice of the father was amply justified is borne out by the varied achievements of Samudragupta during his long period of rule extending over fifty years. He is, without doubt, the most eminent member of the dynasty. It looks strange, indeed, that before the decipherment of the Allahabad inscription some fifty years ago, this great ruler of India was quite unknown to history.)

Samudragupta
A.D. 335—375

The most important source of information of Samudragupta's reign is the inscription incised by his command upon the pillar which was set up by Asoka more than six centuries before at Prayag and on which the great emperor had engraved some of the principles of Buddhism. It is a strange coincidence that

Allahabad
Inscription

¹The Kota family like that of the Guptas had originally moved from the Panjab in connection with their official duties under the Sakas. The Kotas, in course of time became the chiefs of Pataliputra.

the same pillar should bear inscriptions of these two sovereigns, Asoka and Samudragupta, who had almost exactly opposite ideals. Asoka, as we know, was the apostle of peace and non-violence whereas Samudragupta stood for war and aggression.

The inscription of Samudragupta was composed by his court poet Harisena and appears to be a fairly faithful summarised record of the emperor's military achievements.¹ We learn from this inscription that he waged three major wars, two in northern and one in southern India and that in all the three campaigns he came out triumphant.

Under the pressure first of the Nagas and later of the Vakatakas, the Kushan power had collapsed in the Gangetic Doab and even in the Panjab. In the eastern and the

Political condition of Northern India

south-eastern Panjab comprising modern districts of Ambala, Jullundur, Ferozepur, Hissar, Montgomery, etc., a number of tribal chiefs had set up their independent governments.

Similarly, the eastern border of Rajputana down to Malwa and central India was studded with small monarchical and tribal States. The inaccessible regions of Bundelkhand and the Vindhya have almost always been the home of the freedom-loving clans. They were ruled by their tribal chiefs. To the north of this region, the Guptas had established their power in Oudh and Magadha. Beyond Magadha were the kingdoms of Pundra (northern Bengal) and Kamrupa (Assam). On their southern side the Guptas came into contact with Kalinga beyond which lay the petty States which had come into being on the break up of the Andhra empire. From Bundelkhand southwards running across the Deccan plateau to modern Karnatic was the powerful kingdom of the Vakatakas under Pravarasena I. In western India (Malwa, Gujarat and North Konkan) the Saka Satraps still held their power. These were approximately the political divisions of India when Samudragupta ascended the throne.)

As ruler of Oudh, Allahabad and Northern Bihar, Samudragupta first of all came in contact with the Naga princes who

First Northern Campaign

ruled over Mathura, Rohilkhand and Gwalior and owed allegiance to the Vakataka emperor Pravarasena I. Samudragupta could not do much so long as Pravarasena lived, but after

his death, as the Allahabad Pillar Inscription seems to suggest, the Gupta monarch launched a well-organised campaign against the Nagas and subdued those of Mathura, Rohilkhand and Gwalior and annexed their territories. He also recovered Pataliputra and strengthened his hold over Magadha. The

¹The inscription is, unfortunately, undated, but it is not a posthumous document as supposed by Dr. Fleet.

conquered territories were constituted into several Imperial sub-divisions or *Vishyas*, each of which was placed under the charge of a governor.))

The next task of Samudragupta was to challenge the power of the Vakatakas in the Deccan. So he proceeded to invade the Vakataka vassal States. This was a long and arduous campaign which extended over more than two years. The Pillar Inscription mentions as many as eleven kings of the south who were subdued by Samudragupta during this campaign. Most of these, as already remarked, owed allegiance to the Vakatakas and were now made to transfer their loyalty to the Gupta sovereign. *South Indian campaign*

It is difficult to trace with precision the route which Samudragupta followed in his South Indian campaign. It appears almost certain that he marched close along the eastern coast keeping within an easy reach of the sea. The probable course of his expedition was as given below. Setting out from his capital city Pataliputra, he conquered Mahendra of Kosala, on the banks of the Mahanadi in the region of Sambalpur. He then entered Mahakantra (modern Gondwana forests) where he defeated a king named Vyaghraraja. Emerging from the forests, the imperial forces invaded the region near the Colair lake and defeated in succession "Mantaraja of Korala (Kalinga), Mahendra of Pushtapuram, Swamidata of Kothura and Damana of Eranapalla." His victorious march farther south, however, alarmed the rulers of those regions and they formed a coalition to stop him. Accordingly when he reached the banks of the Krishna he was met by a confederation of kings led by Vishnugopa, the Pallava ruler of Kanchi. According to the inscription, Samudragupta is said to have obtained a victory over the confederate chiefs though it seems probable that he thought it prudent not to pursue his march farther south. The latest reading and identification of place-names mentioned in the Allahabad inscription seems to show that Samudragupta's South Indian campaign covered a more limited area than was at one time thought.))

The next group of States with whom Samudragupta waged wars, are the Pratyanta Nripati or the frontier kings of North-East India and the Himalayan region and the tribal principalities of the Panjab, Western India and Malwa. The most important of these States which submitted to the mighty Gupta emperor were Samtata in East Bengal, Devaka to the north of Samtata and Kamrupa in Assam. *Second Northern campaign*

The northern Pratyanta which agreed to pay tribute and homage were Nepal, Kumaon, Kangra and Garhwal. Of the

tribal States which are grouped with these kings and are mentioned in the inscription to have paid homage were the Yaudheyas, the Madrakas, the Arjunayanas and the Malwas, who occupied all the territory between Mount Abu in Rajputana to the Panjab rivers, the Ravi and the Beas.

There is still another group of States which according to the Inscription hastened to enter into diplomatic relations with this powerful Gupta monarch and purchased peace by various acts of homage. These were

Diplomatic relations

Daivaputras, Shahanashahi and Saka Marunda.

It is not possible to identify with certainty these titles or ethnic terms but, most probably, all were representatives of the Sakas and Kushans who had once ruled in Afghanistan, the Panjab, Surashtra and Central India.

Samudragupta also appears to have maintained friendly relations with Meghavarna, the ruler of Ceylon, who, according to a Chinese historian, sent an embassy with gifts to the court of the Gupta monarch to obtain permission to erect a monastery at Gaya for use of the Buddhist pilgrims from his country.

On his return from the South Indian campaign, Samudragupta performed the ancient horse-sacrifice.¹ To commemorate

The horse-sacrifice

the occasion special gold coins, with the figure of the doomed horse standing before the alter, were struck by order of the emperor. It was after the celebration of this sacrifice that he

took the title of *Ashvamedha-parakramah* (Restorer of the Horse-sacrifice) which is found added to his name. The view that the horse-sacrifice had not been offered by any king since the days of Pushyamitra does not seem justified in the light of facts. Several kings like Satkarni, Pravarsena Vakataka and others had performed this ancient and much honoured rite during the interval between Pushyamitra and Samudragupta.

Samudragupta's direct rule extended over a vast territory stretching from the river Hooghly on the east to the Jumna and

Extent of his dominion in the north

the Chambal on the west and from the foot of the Himalayas in the north to the banks of the Narbada in the south. Vast though these dominions were, his sphere of influence was wider still. The rulers of the Himalayan

regions like Nepal, Kumaon, Garhwal and Kangra on one side, those of Samtata, Devaka and Assam on the other, and the republican tribes of the Panjab and eastern Rajputana on the third did him homage as their overlord. Besides, the distant Saka rulers of the Panjab and Kabul and Surashtra sought his friendship. All this was Samudragupta's work. He may

¹There is no mention of the sacrifice in the Allahabad inscription. The inscription was probably, incised immediately on the conclusion of the campaign and before the performance of the sacrifice.

therefore, be justly called Napoleon of India, as Dr. Vincent Smith chooses to call him.

Samudragupta was not only a great soldier and conqueror but he was equally distinguished in the arts of peace. The Pillar inscription tells us that he was a skilful musician and a "Kaviraja or prince of poets." *Samudragupta's personal accomplishments* His proficiency in music, indeed, finds corroboration in what are known as the "lyrist" type coins of Samudragupta. This coin represents the emperor seated on a highbacked couch, playing on the Indian lyre or *Vina*. Samudragupta died in or about A.D. 375¹.

Samudragupta was succeeded by his son Chandragupta who is also mentioned in some inscriptions by another name, viz. Deva Gupta, Deva-Sri or Deva-Raja. Like his father, Chandragupta was a great conqueror *Chandragupta II or Vikramaditya* and a liberal patron of art and literature. His period of rule, in Indian tradition, represents A.D. 375—414 the most glorious period in the annals of early India.

Samudragupta had successfully accomplished the difficult task of building up the Gupta empire. He had extirpated a number of Kings of the Aryavarta and annexed their territories, had overawed the frontier rulers into submission and had cultivated friendly relations with the independent rulers of the North-West. The Saka Satraps of the west and the Vakatakas of Central India, however, were still holding their own and continued to be important factors in the contemporary politics of the country. Chandragupta, on his accession, was called upon to deal with these two powers. *Position of Chandragupta*

The Vakataka Kings ruled over Central India and the northern Deccan. Their dominions thus occupied an important geographical position in which they could be of much service or disservice to Chandragupta if he was ever to invade the dominions of the Saka Satraps of Gujarat and Malwa. He decided, therefore, to make alliance with the Vakatakas and secure their help or goodwill. And this he did by giving his daughter in marriage to Rudrasena II, the head of the ruling family of the Vakatakas. In making this alliance with the *Alliance with the Vakatakas* object of adjusting his foreign policy, Chandragupta may be said to have only followed the traditions of his family. The marriage of Chandragupta I with the princess of the Lichhavi clan had materially contributed to the strengthening of his position in the province of Magadha. Chandragupta II himself

¹Samudragupta's death and the accession of his son and successor Chandragupta II is variously placed between the years A.D. 375 and 380

was married to a princess of the Naga family of Narwar and now he gave the hand of his own daughter to Rudrasena Vakataka.

Having made his position secure in respect of the Vakatakas, Chandragupta marched against the Saka Satraps of Malwa and Gujarat. Both these provinces had been, for long time, under the domination of the foreign rulers and had offered a serious obstacle to the expansion of the Gupta empire southwards and westwards. The imperial forces scored a complete victory over the Sakas and their territories were annexed to the empire. The task of conquest of Chandragupta, it seems, was rendered easier as the resources of the Satraps had already been exhausted on account of the prolonged Saka-Vakataka struggle in which they had been engaged for about half a century. These victories over the Sakas earned Chandragupta the title of *Sakari* or the 'slayer of the Sakas.'

The conquest of Malwa and Surashtra not only brought a considerable accession of revenue and territory to the Gupta empire, but it also contributed, very largely, to the enhancement of the political prestige of the Gupta dynasty, as these Western Satraps were practically the last survivors of the foreign ruling houses in India. Again, the annexation of Malwa, Gujarat and the peninsula of Kathiawar pushed the boundary of the empire to the western coast and helped in bringing the rich maritime commerce of India under the direct control of the emperor of Magadha. The merchandise which was brought to the western ports of India from Alexandria and other ports of the Red Sea could now be easily transported right into the interior of the country by the land route which passed through Malwa (Ujjain) and thence to Mathura and Pataliputra. It also brought the rich merchants of the interior of India into contact with the business men of Greece and Rome trading in the Mediterranean Sea.

The original capital of the Gupta empire was at Pataliputra, but, with the westward development of his empire, Chandragupta made Ujjain a second capital. It became a most important *entrepot* where trade routes from different directions converged. In fact, the Indian tradition associates Chandragupta only with Ujjain, and almost all his inscriptions have been discovered in Malwa.

Large numbers of gold and silver coins¹ of the Gupta

¹It appears from the account of Fa-hien that the currency used for minor transactions was the cowrie or shell. The cowrie currency was in use in small towns of the Panjab even as late as the nineties of the last century.

sovereigns have been, and are being, discovered every year and reveal various types. We have already referred to the 'Ashva-medha' and the 'lyrist' types of Samudragupta's coins. Among other types may be mentioned the 'archer' and the 'lion-slayer' types of both Samudragupta and his son, Chandragupta II. In the 'archer' type the king is shown as an archer with a bow in his right hand whereas the 'tigerslayer' type portrays him as the very picture of energy and physical strength. He is shown wearing an ordinary waist-cloth and slaying a live tiger with bow and arrows. Of Samudragupta's coins there is yet another type, namely the 'battle-axe' type, in which the king is wearing full dress. This type seems to proclaim the triumphant march of his army and is very rare.

Gupta coins and inscriptions

Of the inscriptions of the Gupta period, the most important from an historical point of view is the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta. The other inscriptions of the Gupta kings which have been discovered so far, originate from private individuals and record the construction of caves, temples and other buildings and are dated in the Gupta Era.¹

The date of the death of this mighty Gupta monarch is not exactly known but it must have happened somewhere between A.D. 413 and 414; since the Sanchi inscription shows that he was still reigning in G.E. 93 (A.D. 412-13) while the Bilsad inscription of G.E. 96 (A.D. 415-16) refers to the reign of Kumargupta I.

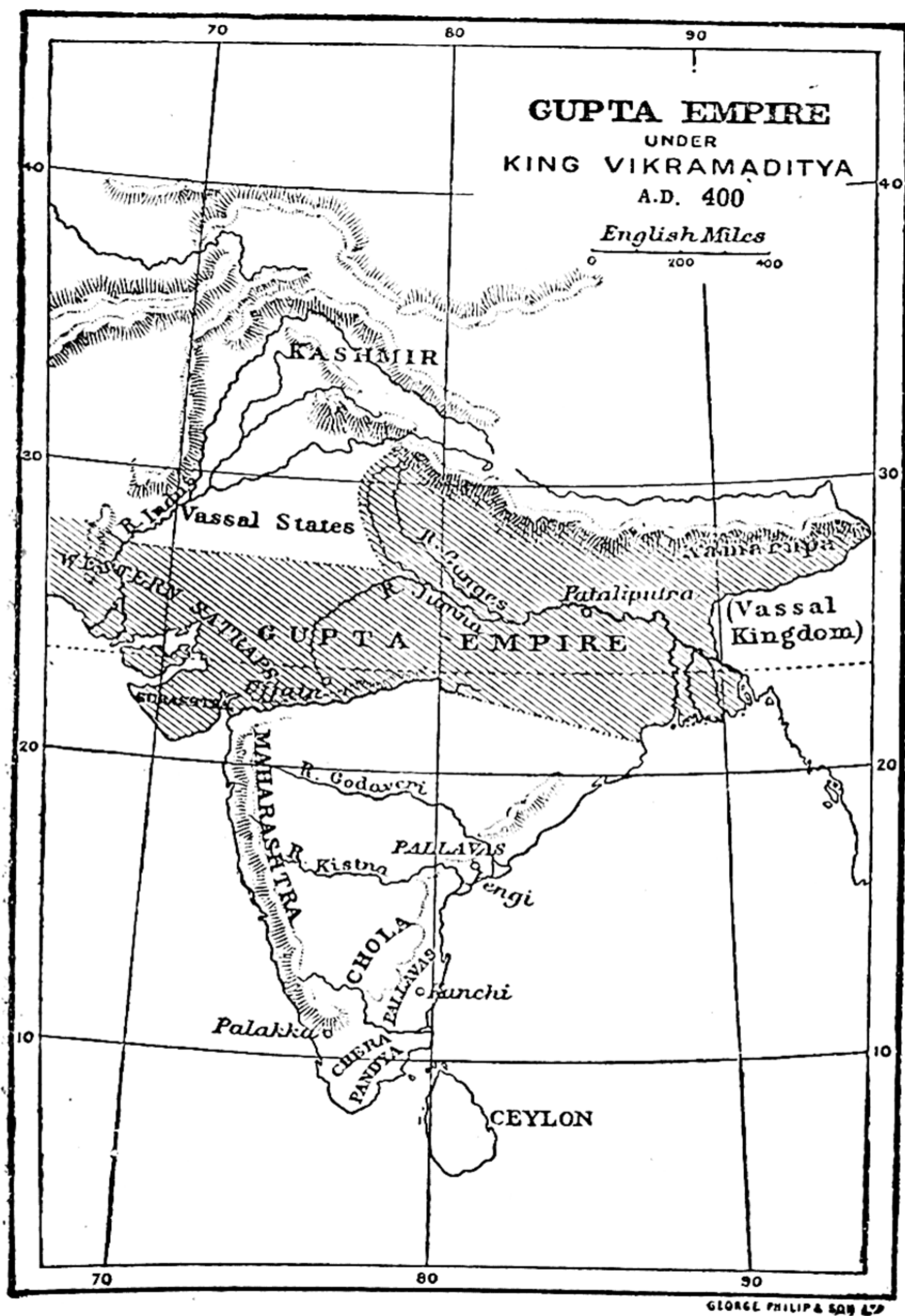
Chandragupta's death A.D. 413-15

The Gupta empire reached its widest limits under Vikramaditya. The task of the building of the empire begun by his grandfather was completed by him. The last of the Satraps who symbolized the age long political domination by foreigners were now dislodged from power. The Vakatakas of Bundelkhand and the Deccan who were the rival

Achievements of Chandragupta

¹The Udayagiri (Bhilsa) cave inscription mentions Chandragupta II as the reigning sovereign. It records the excavation of the cave by a Gupta feudatory chief of the Sanakanika family and is dated in the year 82 of the Gupta Era which may be taken to show that the Northern Malwa had been annexed by the Guptas before A.D. 401. Another inscription in the Udayagiri cave, though undated, is of some historical importance. Like the one of the god Shiva, by one of Chandragupta's ministers, Virasena Saba, accompanying the king (Chandragupta) when he was "seeking to conquer the whole world," so that the inscription was incised during Chandragupta's campaign against the Western Satraps. The Sanchi (Bhopal) inscription is dated in the year G.E. 93 (A.D. 412-13) and records the gift of a village to a Buddhist monastery by one Amrakardeva, a general in Chandragupta's army. In this inscription, Chandragupta is called Deva-raja. Similarly, in the Gadhwā (Allahabad) inscription dated G.E. 88, Chandragupta is only mentioned by his title of "Parmbhagvata Maharajadhiraja."

Indian power were cleverly brought under the political influence of the Guptas now that Chandragupta's daughter (Prabhavati-



gupta) ruled as regent on behalf of her two sons, on the throne of the Vakatakas. Except, perhaps, for a few tributary rulers

or tribal chieftains on the frontier of the empire there was no independent ruler left in the country who could challenge the authority of the Gupta sovereigns.

Chandragupta was not only a great conqueror but he was also a statesman and a liberal patron of arts and learning. Tradition ascribes to his court the 'nine gems' of science and learning, among whom the most well-known is Kalidasa. —As a ruler and administrator, Chandragupta comes second to none who governed India either before or after him. "Probably India has never been governed better after the Oriental manner," writes Dr. Vincent Smith, "than it was during the reign of Chandragupta Vikramaditya." He was, indeed, loved and respected by his people.

In his religious views, too, Chandragupta appears to have been very liberal. Although the emperor himself professed the Vaishnava cult, some of his officers were either Buddhists or Shivites. The King's minister of peace and war, named Saba Virasena, for instance, was a Shivite, and Amrakardeva, a general of Chandragupta's army was a Buddhist. Royal patronage was munificently extended to people of all sects by the Gupta emperors.))

The Chinese pilgrim, Fa-hien visited India during the reign of Chandragupta and has left an account of his travels. The greater portion of this account is taken up with legends about Buddha and the holy sites *Fa-hien* and monuments connected with Buddhism. It is only incidentally that he speaks of the people and their civilization, but, even these casual remarks are a great help in the elucidation of a subject of which our knowledge is otherwise so meagre and poor.¹

Fa-hien's entire journey took him fifteen years out of which he spent six years in India, a sufficiently long period, to enable him to form a correct impression of men and things. He came by the land route from China, across the Gobi Desert, and Khotan. He then crossed the Pamirs and entered India by way of Udyana (Swat) and passed through Gandhara, Peshawar and Taxila. Crossing the Indus and passing through the Panjab, Fa-hien went to Mathura and then to Malwa and from Malwa to Kanauj and then to Pataliputra where he spent the last three years of his stay in India. He returned home by the sea route, taking a boat at the port of Tamralipti; and on the way visited Ceylon, Java and other islands with which the Indian merchants had a brisk trade.

¹Compare this account with that of Megasthenes which gives a fuller description of the social and political institutions of India under the Mauryas. A closer study of these two accounts enables the reader to form an idea of the social, political and religious changes that had taken place in our country during the space of seven hundred years.

Fa-hien's itinerary contains interesting notes regarding the people and the places that came under his observation. About Gandhara, Swat, Peshawar and Taxila, he writes that the people living in this region are thoroughly Buddhist. He gives a detailed account of the monasteries which he visited in these places. *Religious Conditions* The language and the dress of the people of this region, he writes, were nearly the same as those of the people of 'Mid India.' At Peshawar he saw the Buddhist tower which was erected by Kanishka. Mathura and the Doab, according to the Chinese pilgrim, were also important centres of Buddhism. Malwa was the next important region visited by the pilgrim and of this he gives a lively account. "The climate of the country," he says, "is mild and equitable. The people are numerous and happy." Kanauj, Kapilvastu, Kusinagar, and Pataliputra were the next important places visited by Fa-hien. In these parts of the country, Buddhism seems to have been on its last legs. The devout pilgrim was disappointed to observe that both Kapilvastu and Kusinagar were now deserted and the few families connected with the monks were the only population. The Buddha Gaya which was once a flourishing centre of the Buddhist pilgrims was also deserted and came to be surrounded by jungle.

It appears from Fa-hien's description that the Buddhist faith was flourishing in the north-west frontier and the Panjab and also in Bengal. But it was definitely waning in mid-India. Here Brahminism predominated and the King himself was a devout follower of Vaishnavism. The relations between Buddhism and Brahminism were generally cordial. Nowhere in the itinerary of Fa-hien we come across a mention or even a hint of persecution of one faith by another. On the other hand, a couple of inscriptions seem to show that the Gupta monarchs were liberal in their religious views. They did not mind if any of their high-placed officers professed a creed other than their own.

In connection with his visit to Pataliputra, Fa-hien writes that the people are rich, prosperous and of charitable disposition. There are charitable dispensaries in the town which are maintained by the benevolence of the rich inhabitants. To these dispensaries repair the destitute, the crippled and the diseased. Physicians inspect their diseases and they get food and drink and medicine gratuitously."¹

Speaking of the habits and manners of the people, Fa-hien

¹The provision of free dispensaries and hospitals for men and beasts as well as the building of Dharmshalas or rest-houses on the highways for the convenience of travellers are amongst the very ancient institutions of India. Asoka built many such benevolent houses.

Itinerary

observes that "throughout the whole country the people do not kill any living creature, nor drink intoxicating liquor, nor eat onions or garlic. The only exception is that of the Chandalas."

*Habits and
manners of the
people*

When we compare this description of Fa-hien with the picture of society as revealed by the Epic literature and also scrutinise the elaborate regulations given by Chanakya in his Arthashastra regarding the issuing of licences for liquor shops, gambling houses, and the plantation of the Soma plant, we find that the Buddhist ethics of Ahimsa had made a deep and lasting impression on society, and had almost altogether changed its tenor. In the Epic age, hunting and drinking appear to have had been the chief relaxations of the Aryan aristocracy whereas in the Gupta age it is only the Chandalas or people in the lowest wrung of society who are expected to indulge in liquor or eat meat.

We have had occasion to remark on a previous page that Chandragupta's administration was very well organised, and that the people, under his rule, were happy, contented and prosperous. Fa-hien, too, pointedly mentions that the code of punishment followed by the Gupta sovereigns was mild and that the government imposed no restrictions on the free movements of the people. "The people," observes Fa-hien, "have not to register their households or to attend to any magistrates and their rules. If they want to go, they go; if they want to stay on, they stay. The chief officers of the king have fixed incomes, and they are not tempted to extort money from the poor people. The king governs without corporal punishment. Criminals are simply fined, lightly or heavily, according to the circumstances of each case. Even for repeated attempts at rebellion the culprits only have their right hand cut off." Capital punishment was practically unknown.

Administration

Detailed information, such as we possess regarding the structure and machinery of government of the Mauryas, is not available in regard to the Guptas. But a number of seals and inscriptions¹ of the Gupta period when closely studied reveal glimpses of very highly organised civil and military services. The emperor, it appears, was assisted by a body of high Ministers who held charge of various departments of the State.²

*Machinery of
Government*

It is not clear whether the Gupta emperors like their Mauryan

¹Some of these important seals were discovered among the ruins of Vaisali and Nalanda and contain the names and designation of the officials.

²The division between civil and military officials was, probably, not very rigid. The Karmadande inscription of Kumargupta I dated G.E. 117 (A.D. 436-37) reveals Prithvisena as holding different offices at different periods of his service. There is also a reference to his father, Shikharsena, who was the minister of Chandragupta II.

predecessors had any other councils or mantriparishads except the body of high Ministers. But the existence of local corporations to assist the governors in the provinces and districts is proved by a couple of seals and inscriptions.

The empire was divided into a number of provinces called Desas or Bhuktis and sub-divided into districts called Pradesas or Vishyas. The names of several Desas and Bhuktis and in some cases the names of their governors also occur on seals and in inscriptions.

*Provincial
Government*

The province of Tribhukti, with its capital at Vaisali, was governed by Prince Govindagupta, a son of Chandragupta II. The seals mention a number of officials from the Governor downwards. Besides the personal seal of the Governor, there is also one of his office and two other officials who were, probably, on his personal staff namely his chamberlain (Mahapratihara) and his chief minister (Kumaramatyadhikarana). Amongst other officials and departments mentioned in these seals, the more important were the chief of the military forces, the treasurer of the Army, the chief of the Police, the Maha-dandanayaka (chief magisterial officer) and the office of the Chief Censor.¹

A Vishya or district was placed under the charge of an officer called Vishya-pati. Then, as now, the post of a District Officer

*District and
Village*

Administration

was regarded as one of great importance in the official hierarchy and was held by Imperial officials like the Kumaramatyas and Uparikas. The District officer was assisted by an advisory body composed of four leading citizens of the district town representing various guilds or communities, like the bankers, the artisans, the merchants and the literary classes.² Every Vishya consisted of a number of villages (gramas) which were administered by local officials variously known as Gramikas, Mahattaras and Bhojakas.

Chandragupta II was succeeded by his son Kumargupta I, sometime in A.D. 414-15. Contemporary literature contains

*Kumargupta I
A.D. 414-455*

little or no reference to the events of his reign but his extensive coinage and the distribution of his inscriptions over a wide area suggest that Kumargupta was able to maintain the strength and unity of the empire which he had inherited from his father.

¹The Censor was probably the lineal descendant of Asoka's Dharma Mahamatra, and the existence of this official in the days of the Guptas seems to suggest that the care and elevation of the moral conduct of the people had come to be regarded as one of the principal duties of the State.

²Vide copper-plate inscriptions of Kumargupta's times discovered at Damodarpur (Bengal) dated G.E. 124 and G.E. 126. These inscriptions were intended to record the purchase of land for some charitable purpose but incidentally throw light on the administrative organization of a district.

One inscription dated in the year 493 of the Malwa era (A.D. 437-38) and found at Mandasar (W. Malwa) seems to suggest that Kumargupta also added some territories to his already vast-empire. The inscription mentions the name of king Bandhuvvarman who was defeated by Kumargupta and made to acknowledge the Gupta suzerainty.

During the main part of Kumargupta's reign, the country continued to enjoy peace and tranquillity, the people were prosperous, and trade and commerce flourished under the system of *Shrenis* or self-governing guild organizations. The Mandasar inscription referred to above, seems to suggest that the Western Malwa was rapidly developing into a flourishing centre of cotton and silk goods and that the silk wares of the weavers of Mandasar had such a fine finish that they captured the entire markets of central and northern India in a short time. *Economic prosperity*

Towards the end of Kumargupta's rule, the empire was seriously disturbed by the invasion of the Pushyamitras¹ and the Huns.

Some of the inscriptions of Kumargupta contain references to the governors and officers of the various provinces of his empire. The government of the province of Surashtra was entrusted to Govindagupta, the younger brother of the emperor; that of Bengal to one Chitradatta; and of Malwa to Ghatotkacha Gupta. The Karmadande (Faizabad District) inscription dated G.E. 117 (A.D. 436-37) records the name of one Prithvisena as the chief minister of Kumargupta. Subsequently he rose to the position of the Commander-in-chief of the Gupta armies. The inscription also records that Prithvisena's father, Shikhar-swami, held the post of Chief minister under Chandragupta II. This shows that family claims were recognised in government services. *King's ministers and other officers.*

Kumargupta died in A.D. 455 and was succeeded by his son, Skandagupta. Several important inscriptions of Skandagupta have survived, which help in the re-construction of the history of his reign. Of these, the most valuable and probably, also the earliest, is the pillar inscription found at the village Bhitari in the Ghazipur District. Although the primary object of this inscription was to record the installation, by the emperor, of an image of Vishnu as an act of thanks-offering for his victory over the Huns, the inscription contains allusions to several important historical events. We are told that *Skandagupta A. D. 455—468*

¹It is not certain who these Pushyamitras were. Some scholars confuse them with the Huns, while others think they were people of Iranian origin.

Dangers to the Empire: Pushyamitras and the Huns in his last days, Kumargupta's empire was threatened by serious dangers, that the prince Skandagupta was still engaged in war against the Pushyamitras when his father passed away, and that on his return home he had to announce the news of the victory to his mother. The other enemies who are mentioned in the inscription and are said to have threatened the empire of the Guptas were the Huns. Skandagupta also fought against them with success and stemmed the tide of the Hun invasion for the time being. Similarly, the inscription goes on to say that this 'valiant emperor saved the empire from the catastrophe and restored the fallen fortunes of his family.' On one occasion during this campaign, the inscription further adds, Skandagupta had to sleep on the bare ground and also suffer other hardships like a common soldier. Another long inscription, that of Junagarh dated G.E. 138 (A.D. 457-58) seems to confirm some of the references in the Bhitari inscriptions.

We are again told how, after the death of his father, Skandagupta was confronted with serious dangers and how he broke the pride of the Malechas (probably the Huns). *Defence of the Frontiers* A further passage in the same inscription seems to suggest that the defence of the frontiers had already become a serious problem even at the commencement of Skandagupta's reign; and that he had to select, with great care, the governors of some of these provinces. Central India and Surashtra seem to have been the most vulnerable parts of the Gupta empire; and the Junagarh inscription tells us that "he (Skandagupta) deliberated for days and nights before making up his mind who could be trusted with the important task of guarding the lands of Surashtra." Eventually a most faithful and valiant officer named Paranadatta was sent as Governor of the Western provinces; Sarvanaga Vishyapati as Governor of the Doab and Bhimavarman as the ruler of the Kosam region.

During the earlier part of his reign, Skandagupta restored the gold and silver coinage which had been debased during the later years of Kumargupta to its proper weight. *His coins* After the Hun war, he had again to take recourse to the use of alloy with gold and silver. Skandagupta's coins take after the model of his grandfather and father, namely the "archer" and other types; the only new type being the "King and Lakshmi" type in which he is represented as wedded to the Goddess of Fortune—a fact significant of his success in restoring the fallen fortunes of his house.

Another important event of Skandagupta's reign was the restoration of the dam of the great Sudarshana Lake which had

been originally built in the time of Chandra-gupta Maurya. Owing to heavy rains in or about A.D. 456, this mighty dam was again breached and was re-built 'stronger than before' by Paranadatta's son, Chakrapalita, the governor of Girnar. It was probably breached again but never repaired. The lake no longer exists. (See also p. 131.)

*Repair of the
Sudarshana
Lake*

The last ten years of Skandagupta's reign were spent in comparative tranquillity; but towards the close of this period a fresh swarm of Huns poured down into the Panjab and Rajputana and then advanced eastwards and overwhelmed the empire.¹ Skandagupta died in or about A.D. 468 and with him the glory of the Gupta empire departed.

*Last years of
Skandagupta*

Like the empires of the Mauryas and of the Kushans, the empire of the Guptas enjoyed a long and prosperous span of life. Under the liberal patronage of the Guptas, great poets and learned men wrote some of the most celebrated works in Sanskrit language. The country, as will be explained later in these pages, was well put on the road to progress by the successive efforts of the Nagas, the Vakatakas, and the Guptas. But it was not destined to continue its march for long. Its career of progress was abruptly checked, and the mighty empire reared by the genius of Samudragupta and Vikramaditya collapsed like a house of cards before the invasion of the Huns. These barbarians, as already remarked, poured down into the Indus valley through the northwestern passes and unchecked in their career of plunder, they came and knocked at the frontiers of the empire. The Gupta sovereigns did not extend their empire beyond the Sutlej, nor did they take any steps to see that a strong and friendly military power was set up beyond their own frontiers in this direction. The Panjab and the north-western passes of India were thus left unguarded with the result that a foreign invasion from central Asia was rendered comparatively easier. The imprudent Guptas had therefore to suffer for their lack of military insight and their empire was overwhelmed when the enemy came in larger numbers. Another cause of the decline was the dissension in the royal family itself. The emperor Skandagupta's step-brother, Purugupta had set up his independent rule in Magadha, and, this division of the financial and military resources of the empire was no inconsiderable factor in bringing about its collapse. The debased coins introduced by Skandagupta also show that he experienced great financial difficulties. Some of the feudatories and the provincial governors too, taking advantage of the family dissension and of the confusion caused by the

*Decline of
the Empire*

¹ Fuller account of the Hun invasion is given in Chapter X of this book.

Hun invasion became insubordinate and withdrew their allegiance from the emperor. The province of Surashtra, for example, was almost lost to the empire after the demise of Skandagupta, a chief of the Maitraka clan, by name Bhatarka, having established himself as its military governor. The serious rebellion caused by the Pushyamitras in the last year of Kumargupta's rule had also impaired the military prestige of the empire. All these factors combined to weaken the empire and bring about its collapse.

Skandagupta was the last of the great line of Gupta rulers. His period of rule was full of stirring events. He struggled hard, though not with success, to save the empire from ruin. He selected the most suitable officers and placed them in charge of the government of frontier provinces. He tried to reconcile his stepbrother, Purugupta who was aiming to set up independent rule in Magadha. But his efforts proved unavailing. As a prince, Skandagupta was called upon to repel the invasion of the Pushyamitras, and as a king it fell to his lot to face a stronger, more powerful and a brutal enemy—the Huns. He held them in check for about ten years but when they came in larger numbers, he succumbed.

It is generally supposed that the Gupta rule ended immediately after the death of Skandagupta. It was not so. A number of the Gupta princes continued to rule over the eastern provinces of the empire including Magadha and the coins and other epigraphical records of these rulers are known even though we do not know much beyond their names.

Skandagupta was succeeded by his half-brother, Purugupta who was followed by his son Narsinhagupta, and the latter in turn, by his son, named Kumargupta II.

Coins are also known of another group of the Gupta princes namely Vainyagupta III, Prakasaditya and Ghatotkacha Gupta.

What their exact relations were to each other or with Skandagupta cannot be ascertained with precision, though the evidence of the coin-finds suggests that Prakasaditya succeeded Skandagupta. It is likely that this group held the central part of the Gupta dominions when Purugupta had seized the eastern portion in Magadha.

There is yet another group represented by Kumargupta III, Budhagupta and Bhanugupta whose coins and dated inscriptions are available. According to the Sarnath inscription dated G.E. 154 (A.D. 473-74) and the Mandasar inscription dated 526 of the Malwa era (A.D. 472-73), the period of the rule of Kumar-

*Estimate of
Skandagupta*

Later Guptas

*Prakasaditya,
Vainya-
gupta III
Ghatotkacha
Gupta*

*Kumargupta
III, Budha-
gupta, Bhanu-
gupta*

gupta III may be placed between A.D. 468 and 476. He was succeeded by Budhagupta. His dated inscriptions found at Sarnath and Eran show that he was in possession of Malwa and northern Bengal, and the territory between the Jumna and the Narbada. Budhagupta was, probably, succeeded by Bhanugupta (A.D. 501-545) who is known by two inscriptions which further reveal that Malwa was invaded by the Huns in his time.

After Bhanugupta, the succession lists become very obscure. Whatever numismatic or epigraphic evidence has been made available seems to indicate that the later Gupta princes had their territory confined only to eastern India, after which time the imperial line of Gupta rulers disappears from the page of history.

SECTION III. THE GOLDEN GUPTA AGE

The Gupta empire may be said to have retained its vigour for a period of a century and a half, between A.D. 320 and 468. This period is characterised as the "Age of the Hindu Renaissance" and has been compared by European writers to the age of Pericles or of Shakespeare. Indeed, the re-union of the whole of Northern India under one rule gave a great impetus to the revival of national spirit which manifested itself in almost every aspect of the life of the nation—political, social, religious, literary and economic.

*Period
of Hindu
Renaissance*

As we have already seen, princes of foreign races like the Indo-Bactrians, the Sakas, the Kushans, and the Kshatrapas were prominent in the history of India during the six hundred years beginning with the second century B.C. It is very rare that we find the name of a Hindu prince on a coin in northern or central India, during this period. In the fourth century A.D., however, the entire political map of Northern India changes. Aryavarta is released once again from foreign domination and reasserts its national independence under the Gupta rulers. The reaction against the alien rule began with the Naga princes. It continued under the Vakatakas and may be said to have reached its culmination under the Guptas when Vikramaditya vanquished the Saka rulers of Malwa and Surashtra and annexed their territories to his own dominions. Again, it is not only the political domination of these foreign rulers that was demolished, but, as we shall presently see, even the influence of the foreign civilization which the great Kushan king, Kanishka, had introduced was superseded by a remarkable revival of Indo-Aryan culture during the Gupta regime.

*Revival of
Hindu Rule*

The most notable movement of the Gupta Age was the gradual displacement of Buddhism by Brahminism or, more precisely,

Revival of Hinduism

Hinduism. Buddhism had made much headway since the time of Asoka. The vestiges and monuments of this period like the *chaityas*, the *viharas* and the *stupas*, which are found in all parts of the country also bear witness to the same effect. Some of these contain inscriptions giving the names as well as the social position of the donor of the gift; and reveal, on closer examination, that the gifts were made by collective bodies of traders and workmen as well as individuals of varying rank and station in life, confirming thereby the view that Buddhism had gained hold of the masses. On the other hand, this period has left little or no trace of a building or sculpture devoted to the use of the Brahminic religion.

But Brahminic religion, though overpowered by Buddhism, was not altogether dead; and as soon as a more favourable and invigorating atmosphere was created under the patronage of the Hindu kings, it got a new lease of life. The Nāga and the Vākata princes lent their full support to Brahminism and in turn, bequeathed their heritage to the imperial Guptas. It was during the rule of the Guptas that the Brahmin priest re-asserted his authority with zeal and vigour. We have inscriptional evidence which shows that innumerable endowments of lands and temples were made to the Brahmins by the kings, their ministers and well-to-do individuals. These temples were devoted to the various gods of the Hindu pantheon such as Shiva, Vishnu, and Sun.¹ Another instance of the revival of the Brahminical religion and ritual is furnished by the fact that some of the Gupta sovereigns deliberately encouraged the performance of sacrifices such as the Ashvamedha, Vajapeya and Agnisoma. Samudragupta, who first performed the horse sacrifice, struck gold medals with the figure of the sacrificial horse to commemorate the event and also added to his titles one of *Ashvamedha parakramah* or the performer of the horse-sacrifice. His grandson, Kumargupta I, is also styled in some of his coins as 'the performer of the horse-sacrifice.' Still another instance of the revival of the Brahminical religion and its recognition by the rulers of the day was the assumption of the title of Parma Bhagwata (worshipper of the god Vishnu) by Chandragupta II, Kumargupta I, and Skandagupta.

But we should like to mention, in this connection, that though Vaishnava in faith, the Gupta sovereigns were tolerant to men of other faiths. Chandragupta Vikramaditya's

¹ It appears that the worship of images, with its elaborate ritual, began during this period. Fa-hien speaks of the gorgeous procession of images carried on some twenty huge cars each over twenty-two feet in height. The super-structure of these was made of bamboos lashed together in five stages. Upon them were placed the images—something resembling the Jhankis of today.

commander-in-chief, Amrakardeva was a Buddhist, while some of his other ministers were worshippers of Shiva. The emperor Samudragupta, as a prince, had received his instructions from the Buddhist saint, Vasubandhu. Again, recent archaeological discoveries have revealed that some of the magnificent Buddhist monasteries were also built in the Gupta age.

*Tolerant
policy of the
Guptas*

With the revival of the Brahminical religion, the Sanskrit language was also revived. In fact, the universal adoption of the Sanskrit language, in place of Pali or Prakrit in books, public documents and inscriptions, is one of the most significant changes that took place during the centuries under survey. During and after the reign of Asoka, the vernacular dialects had acquired such an importance that they were not only used in inscriptions, coins, legends and other official documents but a number of literary works were also composed in them. In the third century A.D., however, a distinct bias in favour of the study of Sanskrit is noticeable.¹ Even the Buddhist literature of the Mahayana was written in Sanskrit; whereas the earlier works of the Hinayana school were mostly in the Pali language. This bias grew rapidly under the patronage of the Nagas and the Vakatakas, and the regime of the Guptas gave it further momentum with the result that the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries witnessed some of the finest productions in the whole range of Sanskrit literature. It is mainly for this reason that the Gupta Age has been called the "Golden Age" of Sanskrit literature.

*Revival of
Sanskrit lang-
uage and liter-
ature*

The brightest years of this Golden Age were during the reigns of the Gupta emperors; and the greatest name amongst the poets and playwrights of the age is that of Kalidasa. His poems and plays have been translated into many languages and are widely read all over the world. Those of his works that have come down to us are: *Shakuntala*, *Vikramurvasi*, *Malavikagnimitra*, the *Raghuvamsha*, the *Kumarsambhava*, the *Meghaduta*, and the *Ritusamhara*. Among other famous names in the secular literature of this period and the centuries intervening between it and the death of Harsha, may be mentioned those of Dandin, Harisena, Bhavabhuti and Amarsingh. Shudraka's *Mricha Katika* (Little Clay Cart) is a play full of life and action, telling of life in the imperial city of Ujjain. Dandin's *Kavyadarsa* (Mirror of Poetry) is an admirable exposition on the art of writing poetry. Harisena's *Prasasti* inscribed on the Allahabad Pillar "shows a mastery of style rivalling that of Kalidasa and Dandin." Amarsingh like Kalidasa is said to have been one of the 'nine gems' that

¹The revival of the study of Sanskrit received the earliest stimulus from Patanjali, (See p. 114).

adorned the court of Vikramaditya. He composed the famous Amarkosha which is still read in every Sanskrit school in India.

The famous book of Fables, the Panchatantra was, probably, composed in this period. It was later on translated into Arabic and then into Persian and it was from Arabia that it travelled into Europe.

The emperors and their ministers themselves were men of wide culture. The Udayagiri inscription, for instance, informs us that Chandragupta Vikramaditya's war minister, Virasena Saba, was a poet, logician, and rhetorician. The emperor Samudragupta himself was also a poet, musician and theologian.

Great progress was made in the domain of scientific studies during this period. Aryabhata, Varahamira and Brahmagupta were, in their own days "the foremost astronomers and mathematicians of the world." Aryabhata was born in A.D. 476 in a village near Pataliputra. In his famous work known as the *Surya Sidhanta*, he examines the true causes of the solar and the lunar eclipses. His calculation of the size of the earth is very near that estimated by modern astronomers.

The *Brihat Samhita* of Varahamira is a compendium of all the available knowledge of the time written in the Epic style of poetry. It deals with astronomy, physical geography, botany and natural history. He is believed to be one of the "nine-gems" of Chandragupta's court. Brahmagupta (born in A.D. 598) was another famous astronomer and mathematician of the age.

The medical schools of Charaka and Susruta continued to flourish during the Gupta age. Some of the interesting medical treatises discovered in the deserts of Turkestan, probably, belonged to the fifth century A.D.)

The literature of the period deals with sundry other subjects which cannot be noticed here in detail.)

Hinduism, as we have said before, was involved in a prolonged struggle with Buddhism during the previous five hundred years

or so. The latter had become a religion of the masses. The Hindu religious and social reformers accordingly, felt the necessity of re-examining the foundations of their religious belief and re-forming their creed in such a manner as to make

it more attractive to men of ordinary intellectual capacity. The old Vedic and Upanishidic philosophy had become unintelligible to an average man. He wanted something that he could understand. To meet this want, and to give a new and more popular shape to the literature of their creed, the Brahmin leaders of society rewrote and re-edited some of their sacred books. The principal Puranas were rewritten in this age. The Epics, the Code of Manu and several other ancient Sanskrit religious books were put into the form in which we now have them.

Recasting of
works on
religious law

There are eighteen great Puranas and all of them are regarded by orthodox Hindus as of divine origin. Each purports to have been spoken by the great sage Vyasa, who heard it from the Creator. Of these eighteen, six are said to be sacred to Brahma, six to Shiva, and six to Vishnu.

Puranic Literature

In the general plan and scheme of its composition this class of literature has much in common. Almost all the Puranas begin with the evolution of the universe from its material causes. They tell us how the gods and their various incarnations, or avatars, lived in heaven and descended upon earth, lived and moved among men to guide the destinies of mankind. In this connection, the authors of these books attempt to expound the efficacy of prayer, formulate the rules of worship of the gods by offerings, by fasts, and by pilgrimages to holy places or tirthas. The descriptions of Hindu holy places, and the religious duty of paying visits to these places has received a fairly elaborate treatment in the Puranas. We also find in them the names of long lines of kings and their achievements which help us in constructing the political history of ancient India.

It cannot be said with certainty when the Puranas were originally composed. Many of the traditions and legends given in them are the same as those of the great epic, Mahabharata. But that they were arranged in the form in which we now have them some time after the fourth century A.D. seems very probable, as the name of the Gupta kings is given last of all in the historical portions of these books.

One of the objects of composing the Puranas was to place some sort of easily intelligible sacred books into the hands of the common people and in doing so, the shrewd Brahmin leader thought he would be able to fight his Buddhist antagonist with his own weapon. The Buddhist priests, as we know, had obtained hold over the masses by putting before them, a sort of literature which suited the mass mind, such as the stories and scenes from the life of Gautama Buddha illustrating his super-human and miraculous powers. There was no dearth of such materials in the history and mythology of Brahminic religion. On the other hand, there was extant, a great store of tales and legends of greater and lesser gods with which the general masses were familiar. All these were accordingly taken by the learned Brahmins and worked up into stories and parables to inspire the spiritual interest of the common people and their faith in the old Aryan gods. The Puranas thus came to be regarded as the 'Scriptures of the masses of the people and have contributed a good deal in moulding the Hindu character in its present form.'

Why the Puranas were composed

The survivals of the works of sculptural and architectural arts

of the Gupta times are so few that it is difficult to write with confidence on the subject. Such specimens as *Indian Art* have survived suggest that the indigenous art like the Hindu religion, learning and literature was undergoing a change. The influence of the Indo-Greek school of Gandhara sculpture seems to have been fast disappearing during the period and a true indigenous school of art was being set up. Except for the representation of scenes or stories from the life of Buddha where a link with the Gandhara tradition was maintained to a certain degree, the Indian sculpture of the Gupta period seems to have shaken off its subservience to the Indo-Greek traditions and motifs and had asserted its personality. The statues of the Buddha carved in the Gupta period have a different arrangement of hair, have decorated halocs round their head and their garments are close-fitting whereas those of the Gandhara monuments are loose and long. The new school again, was employed mainly to the service of Hinduism whereas the old schools of art were almost invariably devoted to the service of Buddhism. Its artists represented incidents of Puranic mythology, and in doing so they introduced fresh ideas and a new technique which was absolutely free from the trammels of the Greco-Buddhist school. The temple at Bhitargaon (Cawnpore), for instance, is 'remarkable for vigorous and well-designed sculpture in *terra-cotta*.' Similarly, some of the fragments of stone sculpture discovered at Sarnath, dating from the time of Samudragupta, reveal figures and reliefs of very high quality. Again, the iron pillar at Delhi,¹ and the 80 feet high copper image of Buddha originally set up at Nalanda show that the Gupta artists and craftsmen were no less capable in working in metal. Two of the finest caves at Ajanta are believed to have been excavated in the Gupta period and the paintings in these caves have elicited the highest admiration from professional critics of art. "Everything in these pictures" observes a Danish artist "from the composition as a whole to the smallest pearl or flower testifies to a depth of insight coupled with the greatest technical skill."²

The impetus which Indian art received in the times of the Guptas led to the formation of two indigenous schools of arts at Sarnath and Pataliputra, which, in their turn, became parents of the mediaeval schools of Bengal and Bihar, and the Chandella and the Dhar (Malwa) schools of Central India.

The most significant movement of the period under review, was the gradual displacement of Buddhism by Hinduism which had gathered fresh vitality and vigour under the patronage of

¹This huge pillar is welded together in sections so cunningly that till recently it was believed to be of cast iron.

²Quoted by Dr. R. C. Maujumdar, p. 553, *Outline of Ancient Indian History and Civilization*.

the Gupta emperors. To explain the process of this displacement, or more correctly of the assimilation and absorption of Buddhism by the parent religion (Hinduism), we shall have to go back a couple of centuries. Gautama Buddha, as we have seen before, had offered to his followers a path to salvation which was quite independent of help from gods and priests. In the course of time, however, Buddhism had changed and the new school of thought (Mahayana Buddhism) offered to its votaries a personal god, with an elaborate form of worship conducted exactly as the Brahmin priesthood would do in the case of the Hindus. This personal god was no other than the Buddha himself. Thus, one important gulf which existed between the followers of Buddhism and Brahminism was made to disappear. Again, the great Teacher of the Sakya tribe had definitely banished all hopes of heaven and all fears of hell by telling his followers that there was no hell and there was no heaven; and that each one of them has to work out his salvation gradually, by doing good deeds in a series of lives which he shall live on this earth. The Buddhist emperor Asoka, on the contrary, held out hopes of heaven to his people, by constantly reiterating that 'good deeds done on this earth will ensure bliss in *Swarga*, or paradise for the doer.' He was, thus, shifting, though unwittingly, the logical position of Buddhism and was bringing it nearer to Brahminism which also promised a blissful life in paradise for the doer of good deeds. The Buddhist sculpture of the Mahayana School also contributed its share in bringing about this rapprochement between Hinduism and Buddhism. Buddha was represented in sculpture as accompanied or attended by some of the Hindu gods like, Indra and Brahma, so that in the eyes of an average lay Buddhist, his great Teacher had become one of the Brahmin pantheon. In the same manner, an average Hindu began to look up to the Buddha as an incarnation of Vishnu.

The ground for the merging of one into the other was thus prepared, in the beginning, without the conscious efforts on the part of either. The deliberate attempts on the part of the Brahmins to assimilate its rival came into play at a later stage. The first of these endeavours was to introduce in Hinduism, those special features of Buddhism which appealed to popular fancy and attracted the masses towards the religion of Sakya Muni Gautama, such as the worship of images, the building of beautiful churches and monastic houses, visits to holy places, and organising pompous religious processions. This sort of devotional religion has always a mass appeal and the shrewd Brahmin fully understood its value. He adopted similar methods in preaching his own creed to the people at large. Accordingly, in

*Decline of
Buddhism* ✓

course of time, the images of gods and goddesses were installed in Hindu temples and pilgrimages to famous shrines and holy sites began to attract millions of Hindus till these became the dominating features of modern Hinduism. Another important aspect of Buddhism which made it popular with the masses was the free and gratuitous knowledge of spiritual truths administered by the wandering Bhikshus or monks in the spoken language of the people. This, too, was adopted by the Brahmins. They started educating the masses by means of reciting *Kathas* or moral and spiritual stories from the Epics and the Puranas and thus ousted the Buddhist monk from this important field of his activity. In fact, it was in pursuance of this endeavour to expound certain essential Hindu doctrine and ideals that the Puranas were first composed. These were primarily meant to serve as the scripture of the common people including those of the lower castes. The missionary organisation of the Buddhists, as we have observed before, was one of the great secrets of their success, and unless a similar institution was founded by the Brahmins they could not be sure of their complete victory over their rival. And it was, probably, to meet this want that the practice of having organised monasteries or agency of Sadhus was also adopted by the Brahmin reformers. Shankaracharya, the greatest opponent of Buddhism had, himself set up a similar *Matha* or monastery. One other direction in which the Brahmins made an effort to get the upper hand over Buddhism was to secure the support and patronage of the rulers of the land. In earlier times, Buddhism had enjoyed the patronage of many powerful rulers both in the North and in the South; and we know that under Harsha, Buddhist monks in large numbers had flocked to Kanauj. After Harsha, we hear of no powerful patrons of the Buddhist monks except the provincial rulers of Bengal and Bihar.¹ The Brahmins, now carried favour with kings and the fighting classes in society. Divine theories of kingship were advocated by priests and the kings themselves were presented as gods in human form and their pedigrees were carried back to Hindu gods and heroes of olden times like Rama and Krishna.² The rigours of caste rules were also relaxed and the foreign martial people like the Scythians, Huns, and Kushans were taken within the Hindu fold as Kshatriyas or Rajputs who, in their turn, became generous patrons of Hinduism.

Another cause of the decline of Buddhism was that its vitality was considerably sapped by schisms and corruptions in the

¹ Even in this part of the country, Buddhism was swept away before the blast of the Muslim invasions under Bakhtiyar Khilji in A.D. 1199.

² It was in the Gupta age that the old books like Mahabharata, Ramayana, and the Code of Manu were recast and a good many tales and legends of Hindu chiefs and tribes were incorporated in these books.

Sangha. The monks grew superstitious, lazy and corrupt. They spent their time in idle talk and discussions about words and forms of religion, and were content with the outward worship of the image of the Buddha and the Buddhist saints.

The last blow to the religion of the Buddha was, however, dealt by the intellectual giants like Kumaral Bhatta and Shankaracharya during the course of the eighth and ninth centuries of the Christian era. They led a strong religious movement which defeated the Jains and the Buddhists and revived the prestige and power of Hinduism. The methods followed by Kumaral and Shankaracharya were purely intellectual. The Buddhist philosophers were challenged to open debates and then made to acknowledge the superiority of the Vedic philosophy. The tradition goes that the condition precedent to these debates was the renouncing of his faith by one who was defeated. After the time of Shankaracharya, Buddhism stood definitely defeated and its subsequent history is restricted to Bengal and Bihar where it secured the patronage of the kings of the Pala dynasty.

NOTES

(A) The most prominent feature of the history of the period from A.D. 250 to 500 is the rise, growth and development of the sentiment of nationality. And this sentiment reveals itself in almost every aspect of the life of the nation. It was brought about partly as a reaction against a prolonged political domination by the alien Greeks, Parthians, Kushans and Saka Satraps; and partly against the Buddhist domination in the domain of religion. The movement set on foot by the Nagas, was continued by the Vakatakas and was carried to its logical conclusions by the Guptas. It is marked by a spirit of revolt against things foreign and by a desire for restoring things Indian. The foreign rule is, by degrees, replaced by indigenous Indian rule in northern, central and western India; the influence of foreign art (the Greek Gandhara art) is shaken off; Buddhism is brought down from its high pedestal and assimilated and absorbed into the parent Brahminical religion; and the use of Pali and the Prakrit languages is discarded in favour of Sanskrit.

(B). The Nagas first appear as champions of the national cause early in the third century A.D. when the Kushan power exhibited signs of decline. The Naga princes (Nava Naga and Virasena Naga) after a struggle of over fifty years succeeded in sweeping away the alien rule from the Gangetic basin and from Mathura. They were worshippers of Hindu gods and were patrons of Sanskrit scholars. They may be said to have played an important part in the political and cultural history of the country at a critical time. They retained power for over 100 years (A.D. 250-350).

(C). The Vakatakas developed their power in the Bundhelkhand region under Praversena I. Under his grandson, Rudrasena I, the kingdom of the Nagas was united to the kingdom of the Vakatakas about A.D. 344-48. His son Prithvisena I, a contemporary of Samudragupta, came in conflict with him and was able to hold his own against the Imperial Guptas.

The Vakataka kingdom, corresponding to modern Berar, held an important geographical position. Chandragupta Vikramaditya, therefore, sought the alliance of the Vakataka ruler, and gave his daughter in marriage to Rudrasena II, son and successor of Prithvisena Vakataka. Though eclipsed by the Guptas for the time being, the Vakatakas, in fact, outlived the Guptas and regained their position and prestige after the demise of Skandagupta in A.D. 468.

The Vakatakas established a strong military power in the centre of the country before the Guptas had appeared on the stage of political history. Their contribution to the revivalist movement is also noteworthy. They were worshippers of Hindu gods, revived old vedic rites and religious practices and bestowed munificent largesses upon Sanskrit scholars. The art of sculpture and painting also developed under the Vakatakas and some of the Ajanta caves are its best specimen.

(D). The revivalist movement reached its culmination in the times of the Imperial Guptas. The last of the Saka Satraps (Malwa and Surashtra) were defeated by Vikramaditya; the worship of the old vedic gods which had been started by the Nagas found further favour with the Guptas and the literary and cultural renaissance which began under the Vakatakas bore a bumper harvest under the Guptas. The arts of architecture, sculpture and painting which had been encouraged by the Vakataka princes flourished on a larger scale in the time of the Guptas when the country enjoyed peace and plenty. The master artisans breathed the spirit of the age and shook off the influence of the Greeco-Buddhist school of Gandhara in the domain of fine arts. In place of the scenes and stories of the Buddhist literature, the scenes and stories in the lives of the Hindu gods and **avatars** were employed as the subject of his skill both by the sculptor and the painter. The Gupta period in which the renaissance movement attained its fullest development, is called the Golden Age of Hinduism.

QUESTIONS

1. Who were the Nagas and the Vakatakas? What part have the rulers of these dynasties played in the history of India?
2. Write a note on the relations which existed between the Vakatakas and the Guptas.
- ✓ 3. Describe the achievements of Samudragupta and Chandragupta Vikramaditya.
4. Discuss the value of inscriptions in reconstructing the history of the Guptas.
- ✓ 5. Why is the period of the Guptas called the Golden Age of Hinduism?
6. "Probably India has never been governed better after the oriental manner, than it was during the reign of Chandragupta Vikramaditya"—Vincent Smith. Comment on this.
- ✓ 7. Write a note on Fa-hien and reproduce briefly the social economic and religious conditions of India as described by him.
8. Examine the causes which brought about the collapse of the Gupta empire.
- ✓ 9. Account for the decline of Buddhism.

THE NAGAS, THE VAKATAKAS AND THE GUPTAS A.D. 150-468.

SERIAL No.	Approximate Dates.	NAME.	REMARKS.
(A)	A.D. 200-350	The Nagas	
1.		Nava Naga	The Nagas had established their authority in Nagpur. Taking advantage of the declining power of the Kushans, Maharaja Nava Naga marched northwards and extended his authority as far as Gwalior.
2.		Virasena	Relation between No. 1 and No. 2 not known. No. 2 is the real builder of the Naga kingdom. He was a great warrior.
3.		Bhava Naga	Last of the great Nagas. His daughter was married to the Vakataka prince Gautamiputra. On his death, the Naga kingdom was seized by Bhava Naga's grandson Rudrasena Vakataka.
(B)	A.D. 250-350.	The Vakatakas	
1.	A.D. 284-344.	Pravarsena I	Reigned for 60 years. Was the real builder of the empire. His son Gautamiputra was married to the daughter of Bhava Naga.
2.	A.D. 344-348.	Rudrasena I	Grandson of No. 1. His father Gautamiputra died and he ascended the throne of the Vakatakas and also of the Naga Kingdom.
3.	A.D. 348-375.	Prithvisena	Son of No. 2. Was contemporary of Samudragupta.
4.	A.D. 375-395.	Rudrasena III	Son of No. 3 Was contemporary of Chandragupta Vikramaditya. Married Prabhavati-gupta, daughter of Vikramaditya.
5.	A.D. 395-415.	Prabhavati Gupta	Wife of No. 4—ruled as regent for her minor son.
6.	A.D. 415-435.	Pravarsena II	Son of No. 4 and 5. The Vakatakas were eclipsed by the Guptas.

Serial No.	Approximate Dates.	NAME.	REMARKS.
7.		Harisena	Last of the line.
(C)	A.D. 320-500.	The Guptas.	
1.	A.D. 320-335.	Chandragupta I	Founder of the Imperial Gupta dynasty.
2.	A.D. 335-375.	Samudragupta	Son of No. 1. Is called the Indian Napoleon. ✓
3.	A.D. 375-414.	Chandragupta II or Vikramaditya	Son of No. 2. The greatest ruler of the dynasty; drove out the Sakas from Malwa and Gujarat.
4.	A.D. 414-455.	Kumargupta I	Son of No. 3.
5.	A.D. 455-468	Skandagupta	Son of No. 4. The empire was shattered by the invasions of the Huns.
6-7.	A.D. 468-473.	Purugupta and Narsinghagupta	Son of No. 5. Probably divided the empire among themselves.
8.	A.D. 473-77.	Kumargupta	Last known ruler of the Imperial line.
			NOTE: The history of the later Guptas is confusing.

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CHAPTER X

Huns And The Break-Up Of The Gupta Empire

The Huns are described as fierce barbarians who carried fire and sword wherever they went. According to the description given in Chinese literature they had "broad shoulders, flat noses, and small black eyes deeply sunk in their heads, and little or no hair on their faces." *The Huns*

It was in the second century B.C. that swarms of these nomads moved from Eastern Asia and in course of time reached Europe and spread over the Eastern and Central parts of that continent.¹ Another horde of these people settled in the valley of the Oxus. From the Oxus they came south into Afghanistan through the passes of the Hindukush mountains, and overthrew the remnants of the Kushan kingdom of Kabul. When they felt their position secure in Afghanistan, the Huns, about the middle of the fifth century (A.D. 458), began to pour into India. Skandagupta who was ruling over the country succeeded in repelling their invasion and this fact is mentioned in one of his inscriptions.² *Invasion of India under Tormana*

The Gupta emperors, as we have seen before, did not extend their rule over the Panjab. The passes in the north-west of this province thus remained unguarded and hordes of these barbarians consequently continued pouring into the country. About the year (A.D. 466-67) the Huns under their intrepid leader Tormana once again fell upon the western provinces of the empire, which was, at this time, torn by internal dissensions. Skandagupta's step-brother Purugupta was his serious rival and he was strengthening his position in Magadha. The forces of the empire were thus divided and the emperor Skandagupta, consequently failed to resist the onslaught of the enemy who had come in large numbers "like flights of locusts."

Tormana occupied the western portions of the Gupta dominions and thus secured a strong foothold for himself. A little later (A.D. 484) the other group of the Huns who had moved south towards Persia also succeeded in subverting the Persian empire

¹The Hun invasion of Europe brought about the collapse of the Roman empire as their invasion of India had caused the destruction of the Gupta empire. The collapse of the Roman empire was followed by the rise of the feudal kingdoms in Europe and that of the Gupta empire by the rise of many petty kingdoms in India.

²Vishnu Pillar inscription See p. 163.

The collapse of Persia opened another floodgate of invasion and allowed further irresistible numbers of the Huns to pour into India through Kandahar. The combined forces of the Huns shook the very foundations of the Gupta empire and wrested the whole of Central India from Skandagupta's successor.

Tormana, as his coins and inscriptions¹ reveal had assumed the style and title of an Indian sovereign, Maharajadhiraj, as previous foreign invaders (the Indo-Bactrians and the Kushans) had done before him. He exercised suzerainty over a number of local Rajas in Central India and the Panjab which formerly owed allegiance to the Guptas. Tormana's kingdom extended over the Panjab, Rajputana and parts of Central India.

Nothing is precisely known of the closing years of Tormana's rule, although it is conjectured that his reign ran into the opening years of the sixth century (A.D. 510-11). He

Mihiragula was succeeded by his son, Mihiragula, who ruled for a fairly long time and dominated regions which included Afghanistan, the Panjab, Rajputana and Malwa. His capital was, probably, at Sialkot. Of Mihiragula's activities, we possess no direct evidence, but concurrent traditions represent him as a ruthless and bloodthirsty tyrant. The Christian monk, Cosmas, who visited India at that time speaks of him as a great oppressor of his people and so does Kalhana, the great chronicler of Kashmir who wrote his account six centuries later.²

Mihiragula's cruelties at last, so runs the Indian tradition, became so unbearable that the Indian princes formed a confederacy, under the leadership of the Gupta king, Baladitya (Narsimhagupta) and Yasodharman of Malwa, to attack the tyrant. In the battle that ensued (A.D. 528) Mihiragula was taken prisoner but the over chivalrous Baladitya released him and allowed him to go into exile. This sort of misplaced piety and chivalry had always been characteristic of the Indian rulers and particularly of the Rajput kings of the Mediaeval age. Mihiragula then retired to Kashmir where the local ruler gave him a jagir for subsistence. After sometime, this ambitious chief rebelled against his benefactor and seized the throne of Kashmir. But he was not destined to enjoy for long, his ill-gotten power, and he died (A.D. 540) after a short but tyrannous reign.

The Huns, as we have said above, had settled in the valley

¹ An inscription which mentions Tormana was found at Eran in the Sagar district of Central Provinces. His coins copy the silver pieces of Skandagupta and bear an image of the Sun which shows that he was a sun-worshipper.

² Kalhana while speaking of Mihiragula's cruelties remarks that he used to take delight in rolling elephants down a precipice. On one occasion, as many as 100 elephants were rolled down from a place called Hasti-vanj in the Pir Panjal range.

of the Oxus. Their dominions stretched over a wide area. In Central Asia their headquarters were at Barian near Herat and their second capital was near the modern Balkah. Their Indian possessions formed only a province of the vast empire, but it so happened that the dominions of the Huns in Asia also came to an end, when their authority in India collapsed with the death of Mihiragula. The Central Asian Huns were overthrown by the Turks in collaboration with the Persians whose king, Feroz was killed by the Huns in A.D. 484.

*Extent of the
Hun Empire*

There is mention of Mihiragula in two inscriptions: one which was discovered inside the fort of Gwalior and the other near Khewra in the Salt Range of the Panjab. The Gwalior inscription records the building of a sun temple in the 15th year of Mihiragula's reign where as the one in the Salt Range mentions the construction of a Buddhist monastery.

*Mihiragula's
coins and
inscriptions*

In the neighbourhood of Gwalior, a number of copper coins of Mihiragula have also been found, although a much larger variety of these was found at Chiniot in the Panjab. These coins show that Mihiragula had become Hinduised. Some of them have an image of the goddess Lakshmi, while a great many have the bull and trident of Shiva.

His Religion

What became of the Huns in India after the defeat of Mihiragula, is not precisely known. Tradition says that when Mihiragula had gone to war with Baladitya of Magadha his younger brother usurped the throne of Sialkot and made an alliance with the Indian princes. The Hun authority, thus, continued in the Panjab and in the north-west for some time even after the death of Mihiragula and; probably, lingered on till the beginning of the seventh century as there is reference to a war between Harsha Vardhana and the Huns.

*Effects of Hun
invasion*

The Hun dynasty was thus short lived and included only two important rulers, namely Tormana and his son Mihiragula. Their power did not extend over a wide area in India, as their coins and inscriptions have been found only in the Panjab, Kashmir and Gwalior, but at the same time, their invasions had profound or rather disastrous effect on the later history of North-western India. The process of political unification started by the Gupta sovereigns was arrested; and the empire built by them was completely shattered. A period of chaos and confusion was ushered in, which continued, with the exception of a brief interval under Harsha, till the establishment of the Muslim empire at Delhi.

The progress and development of literary and scientific studies

which had begun under the Vakatakas and the Guptas received a serious set back owing to the social and political disorganization in northern India. The change in the social organization of Hinduism, which followed the collapse of the Gupta empire is not less significant. The Huns themselves, like their predecessors, the Indo-Greeks, the Sakas and the Kushans were absorbed into Hindu society; and the process by which these foreigners were Hinduised and the warrior clans of the Rajputs were formed is interesting.

The Huns in general, and Mihiragula in particular, are represented as the greatest enemies of Buddhism. They are said to have demolished the noble Buddhist monuments and monasteries all along the route of their march and had thus destroyed for ever the rich treasures of art.

The break-up of the Gupta Empire was followed by the rise of a number of independent provincial powers. In the home provinces of the Imperial Guptas we find a long

*Growth of
Independent
Kingdoms*

line of rulers, who continued to rule in Magadha from A.D. 500-700. The names of ten out of the eleven rulers of this family end in Gupta but their connection with the imperial line is

not clearly known.¹ The power of these later Guptas went on steadily decreasing, and they had to fight hard against their

Later Guptas

western neighbours, the Mukharis, (whose territory corresponded to the present United Provinces of Agra and Oudh) In fact, one of

these namely Damodargupta lost his life fighting in one of these battles. Another ruler named Madhavagupta had accepted the suzerainty of the emperor Harsha. But Madhav's son, Adityasena, appears to have performed the horse-sacrifice which might be taken as an evidence of his sovereign power. Adityasena, probably, took advantage of the death of Harsha to recover the position which his family had lost in the time of his father. The history of these kings is rather confusing.

The great rivals of the later Guptas were the Mukharis, but unfortunately, we know little of the origin and rise of their power. References to this clan-name (Mukhari)

*The Mukharis
A.D. 475-740*

occur in ancient literature which seem to show that they were people of great antiquity. More reliable data, however, carries the genealogy of the ruling dynasty back to a chief, named Harivarman,² who was a contemporary of the Gupta ruler, Krishnagupta of Magadha. That the Guptas and the Mukharis had friendly relations, in the beginning, may be inferred from

¹ See also p. 166.

² The termination *varman* in all the Mukhari names would lead us to believe that they were Kashatriyas.

the fact that Adityavarman Mukhari was married to the sister of Harshagupta of Magadha (A.D. 500-525). Adityavarman was succeeded by his son, Isvarvarman. A reference to his name is made in an inscription engraved on a fragment of stone laid in a wall of the Jaunpur mosque. Isanavarman, the son and successor of Isvarvarman was the first of his line to assume the title of Maharajadhiraj which seems to show that the power of the Mukharis extended considerably during his period of rule (A.D. 525-55). He is credited with the conquest of the Andhra country and also of northern Orissa. On the west of his kingdom, Isanavarman is said to have waged successful war with the Huns of the Panjab. It was, probably, in his time that the Mukhari relations with the Guptas were strained and the Aphsad inscription states that Isanavarman suffered defeat at the hands of Kumargupta.

The Mukhari-Gupta war was carried on for more than two generations, during which time the Mukharis were able to wrest a portion of their Magadha kingdom from the later Guptas. The last ruler of the line was Grahavarman who was married to the princess Rajyasri of Thaneswar (sister of Harsha Vardhana). Grahavarman was killed in a battle (A.D. 605) with the ruler of Malwa named Devagupta and with his death ended the power of the Mukhari dynasty.

The Mukhari kingdom corresponded approximately to the modern provinces of Agra and Oudh. The capital of the kingdom was at Kanauj. The eastern limits of the Mukhari territory were contiguous with those of the Guptas of Magadha and in the south their sway extended over the central provinces and, at one time, even over the Andhra country. In the north, the Mukharis appear to have carried their arms as far as Nepal and, in the west, their authority extended up to Thaneswar. It was, in fact, to guard their western boundary against the inroads of the Hun chiefs of the Panjab that they came into conflict with them and fought so stubbornly under the leadership of Isanavarman, that they were able to keep these marauders in check and earn the gratitude of the rest of eastern India.

In this stupendous task of erecting a sort of territorial barrier against the pouring of the Hun deluge into the Gangetic valley, the Mukharis were helped by a chief named Yasodharman also known as Vishnuvardhan. In one of his inscriptions discovered in the vicinity of Mandasor (Western Malwa), Yasodharman is described as a great king and the panegyrist claims for him the conquest of a vast territory as far as the Arabian Sea in the west and the entire country watered by the river Brahmaputra in the east. His arms penetrated as far as the Himalayas in the north,

*Extent of
Mukhari
Kingdom*

*Yasodharman
of Malwa*

and to the Vidhyas in the south. It may be remarked in this connection that the language of the inscription is so unconventional that the facts mentioned therein cannot be taken as a routine repetition of the traditional panegyric on the part of the court poet. Even, if allowance were made for exaggeration, the impression left after reading the inscription is that Yasodharman had had a very brilliant career. But the unfortunate part of the story is that nothing whatsoever, beyond this inscription and two others of a similar nature, is known about this victor of Mihiragula. We do not know who were the predecessors or successors of Yasodharman. He stands as an isolated figure and is one of the great puzzles of mediaeval Indian history.

Another power that arose on the ruins of the Gupta empire was that of the Maitrakas of Vallabhi. This was founded by Bhatarak of the Maitrak tribe who was a military officer in the Gupta army. It appears very probable that when Chandragupta II overthrew the Saka Satraps of Kathiawar and Malwa he appointed military officers as governors of these provinces and Bhataraka was one of them. During or after the death of Skandagupta, Bhataraka became independent and founded his own dynasty of rulers which lasted till the end of the eighth century. Bhataraka and his son, Dharsena, were content with the modest title of *Senapati* but the succeeding rulers of this house assumed the title Maharaja. A large number of the copper-plate inscriptions of the rulers of this dynasty have been discovered but none of them materially help in constructing the political history of their house. One of the kings of this dynasty, named Dhruvasena II, was married to the daughter of the emperor Harsha Vardhana. The last known ruler of this line is Siladitya VII who was alive and reigning in A.D. 766.

The inscriptions of two other groups of rulers have been found in and about the region which now forms the modern Jubbulpur and Baghelkhand districts. The northern part of Jubbulpur was known, in ancient days, by the name of Uchchakalpa, hence the rulers are called kings of Uchchakalpa. In their inscriptions, these rulers, probably, used the Gupta era. They were feudatories of the Vakatakas of Berar. The names of two of the Uchchakalpa rulers occur on the copper-plate inscriptions: Jayanatha whose dates range from A.D. 493 to 496; and his son, Maharaja Sarvanatha from A.D. 508 to 533. Again, on the top of a plateau in the village Bhumra there stands an inscribed pillar which was, probably, intended as a boundary pillar set up to demarcate the Uchchakalpa boundary from that of its neighbouring kingdom, namely the kingdom of the Parivrajakas.

*The Maitrakas
of Vallabhi*
426-766 A.D.

*The Parivra-
jaka and the
Uchchakalpas*

But the most important dynasty contemporary with the Guptas was that of the Vakatakas, a detailed account of which has been given in the previous *The Vakatakas* pages of this book.

NOTES

After the collapse of the Gupta empire and before the rise of Harsha, Northern India again became a congeries of small states. The Huns ruled over the Panjab, Rajputana and modern Malwa; another small kingdom between the Sutlej and the Jumna was that of Thaneswar; Surashtra and a part of Malwa were organised into a kingdom by the Maitrakas; the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh formed an independent kingdom ruled by the Mukharis; the province of Magadha represented the once mighty empire of the Guptas; and the Vakatakas had recovered the position which they had lost during the Gupta ascendancy.

One noteworthy feature of this period of political turmoil was that the country remained safe from foreign invasion. The only alien power within the country was the one represented by the Hun kings, Tormana and his son Mihiragula. But they could not maintain themselves for long. A confederacy of Hindu princes was formed against Mihiragula. He was defeated and banished to the valley of Kashmir. His successors accepted a subordinate position and became merged in Hindu society.

Another feature worthy of notice is that the disruption of political power did not react adversely on the Hindu religion. On the other hand, the Brahmin leaders of society not only maintained but seem to have further strengthened their hold on the minds of the people. They came to occupy the unique position of advisers and counsellors of the ruling princes; reorganised the structure and regulated the order of society, and brought into its fold many foreigners including the Huns themselves.

QUESTIONS

1. Give an account of the Hun invasion of India. How did it affect the course of political, social and cultural history of the country?
2. Give, with the aid of a map, a brief account of the various kingdoms that sprang upon the ruins of the Gupta empire.

CHAPTER XI

Harsha Vardhana A.D. 606-647

Amongst the many kingdoms which were founded after the break-up of the Gupta empire, one was that of Thaneswar. In its earlier stages, the kingdom of Thaneswar comprised a substantial portion of the eastern Panjab and served as a strong barrier against the expanding power of the Huns situated on its west. On its eastern side was the kingdom of the Mukharis of Kanauj, and, on its south that of the Guptas of Malwa. It was from the relations between these three regions, namely, Thaneswar, Kanauj and Malwa that the empire of Harsha arose, which was destined to play such a distinguished part in the mediaeval history of India.

Our information concerning the history of Harsha is drawn mainly from two sources; one the Harshacharita, a work of Harsha's court poet named Bana; the other the account left by the Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen Tsang. The Harshacharita, as the title of the work signifies, is a biographical sketch of the emperor Harsha. But the poet has introduced so much of the romantic element into his writing that it cannot be accepted as a sober, critical and complete biography. Still, a good deal of solid historical data, verifiable from other sources, can be collected from Bana's literary and eulogistic composition. The second work namely Hiuen Tsang's Travels is, indeed, valuable as a source of history. The author spent about fifteen years in India, studying and taking notes of what he saw and observed in the country. The inscriptions of Harsha together with a few of his great contemporary, Pulakesin II of the Deccan form the additional sources of information for the reign of this last great Hindu Emperor of India.

The Madhuban Plate Inscription traces the genealogy of Harsha for four generations, namely, his father Prabhakar Vardhana, grandfather Aditya Vardhana, great grandfather Rajyavardhana and the latter's father Naravardhana. The three last-named used only the title of Maharaja, whereas Prabhakar Vardhana, the father of Harsha, bore the paramount titles of Paramabhattacharaka and Maharajadhiraja. Little is known of the circumstances attending his rise to supreme power, but Bana relates something of his campaigns. It appears from the account of the court poet that he led various aggressive campaigns

*Kingdom of
Thaneswar*

*Materials for
the history of
the period*

*Harsha's
ancestors*

34
Sheladhye

against his neighbours and extended his dominions at their expense. He became "a lion to the Huna deer, a burning fever to the King of the Indus land, a troubler of the sleep of Gujarat, a bilious plague to that scent-elephant the Lord of Gandhara, a looter to the lawlessness of the Lats, an axe to the creeper of Malwa's glory."¹ It does not mean that Prabhakar Vardhana actually annexed all these states named in the passage quoted above. It is merely a poetical description to show how Prabhakar raised the glory of his house and established his claim to supreme position among the ruling princes of his time. The matrimonial alliances contracted by the family of Prabhakar Vardhana also reveal the fact that the princes of this house had high political ambitions. Prabhakar's mother was a princess of the Gupta dynasty, being the daughter of Maharaja Damodargupta of Magadha. He himself was married to Yasomati, daughter of the emperor Yasodharman of Malwa. His own daughter Rajyasri, Prabhakar Vardhana gave in marriage to prince Grahavarman, son and successor of Avantivarman Mukhari of Kanauj.

Prabhakar Vardhana died in A.D. 605, leaving two sons, Rajyavardhana and Harsha Vardhana. The elder son, Rajyavardhana, succeeded to the throne, and just then news came from Kanauj that his sister Rajyasri was in serious trouble. Devagupta, the king of eastern Malwa, so runs the story in Harshacharita, hastily formed an alliance with king Sasanika of Gauda (Bengal) and fell upon the kingdom of Kanauj, killed Grahavarman and took his wife Rajyasri, a prisoner. When Rajyavardhana received this distressing news, he set out, at once, against the invader of Kanauj and drove out Devagupta but was entrapped and treacherously murdered by Sasanika. Harsha, at once, determined to avenge his brother. He despatched his general Bhandi in pursuit of Sasanika and he himself turned his march in the direction of the jungle where his sister had fled after her escape from the hands of her captors. Bana gives a touching scene in his story of the meeting of the brother and the sister: how Rajyasri was on the point of performing the rite of *Sati* when Harsha suddenly arrived on the spot, dissuaded her, and brought her back to live with him for the rest of her life.

*Death of
Prabhakar
Vardhana and
Rajyavardhana*

Having accomplished the task of avenging the death of his brother the young prince ascended the throne of his father.²

¹ Quoted from Harsha p. 11, Rulers of India Series by Dr. R. K. Mookerjee.
² Both Bana's and Hiuen Tsang's accounts seem to show that Harsha was unwilling to assume royal power and accepted the crown after a good deal of persuasion from his ministers. For the first few years, however, he was content to be known as Kumar-rajā and later on took the title of Siladitya. Born about the year A.D. 590, Harsha's age could not have been more than seventeen at the time.

Harsha's widowed sister, Rajyasri, was the lawful heir to the throne of Kanauj since her husband, Grahavarman, died without leaving male issue. The two kingdoms of Thaneswar and Kanauj were thus amalgamated and the military resources of both were at the disposal of Harsha. The young king then undertook the task of reorganising his army and launching his scheme of *digvijaya* or the conquest of the quarters.

Hiuen Tsang has left us many details of the size and constitution of Harsha's army. It comprised 5,000 war elephants, 20,000 cavalry and 50,000 trained infantry soldiers. Chariots are only casually mentioned by Hiuen Tsang. It is difficult to say with certainty whether this fourth arm of the Indian military service was discarded and if so, when and under what circumstances. It was with this mobile force that young Harsha Vardhana overran the whole of Northern India in a few years.

The details of Harsha's conquests are not available. Bhandi, who was sent in pursuit of the king of Gauda, returned, probably, without subduing his kingdom, for we find an inscription of Sasanika dated A.D. 619-20 in which he is styled as Maharajadhiraj. However, an important result of this campaign was an alliance between Harsha and king Bhaskaravarman of Kamrupa (Assam) who was an inveterate enemy of his neighbour, the ruler of Gauda. The alliance naturally weakened the position of Sasanika who was subsequently compelled to retire from Gauda to Orissa. On his death in A.D. 620, his kingdom was divided by the two allies, Harsha and Bhaskaravarman. Very probably, northern and eastern Bengal fell to the share of Bhaskaravarman, and western Bengal and Orissa came under the jurisdiction of Harsha. Harsha then turned his attention to Devagupta, defeated him and annexed the whole of eastern Malwa.

In the west, Harsha's conquests included the Maitraka kingdom of Vallabhi with its dependencies of Cutch, Surat and Anandpura. Dhruvasena II who ruled over Vallabhi was defeated by Harsha and fled to Bharoch seeking protection of the Gurjar King Dada II. At the intercession of the latter, Harsha restored his kingdom to Dhruvasena as his vassal and in addition gave his daughter in marriage to him which further cemented the political relations between them.

The establishment of his suzerainty over Vallabhi, brought Harsha into conflict with king Pulakesin II of the Deccan.

Pulakesin, the Chalukya king, was a powerful ruler who had subdued almost all the States of Southern India and his career of conquest was as smooth as was that of Harsha in Northern India. The two, in fact may be said to have divided the suzerainty of India, the Narbada and the Vindhya forming the dividing line of their respective spheres of influence. Pulakesin drove back Harsha when the latter had ventured to invade the Deccan about A.D. 634.

*War with
Pulakesin*

From the account given by Hiuen Tsang which is further supplemented by inscriptions and other contemporary sources, it appears that the territory actually administered by Harsha's officials comprised the whole of the modern United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, a large part of Bihar and Bengal (excepting Gauda), Orissa, Central India, Rajputana and the eastern Panjab. The southern limit of his dominion was the river Narbada. The king of Vallabhi in the west, and the Gupta ruler of Malwa, had accepted the position of vassals and the ruler of distant Assam had entered into a political alliance with Harsha. What exactly his relations were with the rulers of Kashmir and the north-west Panjab we cannot say, although Bana gives us to understand that Harsha's father had made his power felt in Gandhara, in the Indus land, in the country of the Huns and in "the inaccessible land of snowy mountains" by which is, probably, meant Kashmir. Harsha's influence thus extended all over Northern India¹ and even beyond.

*Extent of Har-
sha's Empire*

Unfortunately, very little material is available in contemporary literature, which could be made to yield accurate information on Harsha's methods of administration. Something, however, can be gleaned from Bana, Hiuen Tsang, and Harsha's own inscriptions. A perusal of these records leaves an impression on the mind of the reader that, the general framework of administrative machinery, as it obtained during the days of the Imperial Guptas, remained unaltered in its essentials. The *Mantri parishad* or the council of high ministers continued to wield power in matters concerning the determination of State policy. The election of Harsha, for instance, as the successor of his brother was made by this council. The names and designations of several high officers are mentioned in Bana's *Harshacharita*: Uparika Maharaja (Provincial governor), Rajasthaniya (foreign secretary), Senapati (General), Mahabal adhikrita (officer in supreme Command of the Army), Bhogpati (Collector of state taxes), etc. etc. The territorial divisions like Bhuktis (Provinces),

Administration

¹ Harsha is given the epithet *Sakalutrapathanatha* or the master of the whole of Northern India.

Vishyas (districts) and Grama (Village) continued to exist as of old. Hiuen Tsang further bears testimony to the good government of Harsha. The taxes on land were light and so also were the



tolls on roads and ferries. The penal code was not so harsh. Capital punishment was very rarely given. For great crimes the hands and feet were cut off. Trial by ordeal, viz. by means of fire, water or poison, was common. Trade and agriculture

flourished under his benign government and people were happy and contented. The government officials on the civil side were paid their salaries by Jagirs or revenue assignments, whereas the soldiers and officers of the army drew their salaries in cash.¹

Like Asoka, Harsha Vardhana placed before him a high ideal of kingly duty. He seldom or never rested. He was continually travelling up and down his wide dominions to see with his own eyes how the people were ruled.² In regard to the affairs of government in the remoter parts of his vast empire, he kept in constant touch with his officials through his couriers. He was hard on his officials. "He forgot sleep and food in his work," observes the Chinese pilgrim.

Harsha's alliances show that he possessed astute political acumen. On the eastern side of his dominions he concluded an "undying alliance" with the king of Assam, and on the Western side he secured the friendship and alliance of Dhruvasena, the ruler of Vallabhi (Gujarat) whom he gave his daughter in marriage. Harsha is also said to have sent a political embassy to the court of the Chinese emperor Tai-Tsung about A.D. 641 whereupon a Chinese mission also visited Harsha's court at Kanauj. The diplomatic relations with China may be taken as a counterpoise to the friendship of his rival Pulakesin with the Shah of Persia.

The kings of Thaneswar were worshippers of Shiva and so was Harsha in the beginning. But later on he became a Buddhist. Probably, he came under the influence of the Buddhist sage, Divakara Mitra. At first, he adhered to the Hinayana or Lesser Vehicle, but under the influence of Hiuen Tsang, he accepted the doctrine of the Mahayana school. It must not, however, be understood that Harsha reserved his patronage exclusively for the Buddhist faith. On the contrary he maintained the eclectic character of his public worship, and officially honoured the Brahmins, fed them and gave them alms without a stint as he did in the Prayag assembly. Some of his activities, no doubt bear a distinct stamp of Buddhism such as his deep belief in the doctrine of Ahimsa. He seems to have been so profoundly influenced by this doctrine that he forbade the slaughter of any living thing and the use of flesh as food throughout his kingdom, as Asoka had done in his own days. Like Asoka, again, Harsha maintained, at the expense of the State, free hospitals where the sick received medical aid and other facilities. Rest houses and

¹Cf. *Harsha*, p. 97, Ruler of India Series.

²Hiuen Tsang tells us that while on tour the emperor was accommodated in what may be called "pavilions of travel." These were temporary structures built of branches and boughs of trees and were burnt on the departure of the emperor.

Dharmashalas were kept up for the poor and for travellers and food and drink were given to those who used them.

In his zeal for the exposition of the doctrines of the Mahayana school, Harsha arranged a big religious assembly at Kanauj A.D. 643. The honour of presiding over the function was given to Hiuen Tsang. Twenty kings including the emperor attended the conference to which were invited the learned

Assembly at Kanauj scholars of various sects and creeds: 3,000 Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhist monks, 3,000 Brahmins and Jains, and about 1,000

scholars from the Nalanda University besides a large number of visitors. A full-size golden image of the Buddha was placed in the assembly hall. Discussion of religious subjects went on for more than three weeks in which Brahmins, Buddhists and Jains all took part. Towards the close of this period, the proceedings of the conference were marred by an unfortunate incident. The assembly hall suddenly caught fire and in the confusion that followed an hired assassin made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the emperor. On the confession of the assassin he and his Brahmin conspirators were punished.

After the close of the Kanauj conference, the Emperor and all the people went on to Prayag (Allahabad) where another great

Assembly at Prayag ceremony was performed for seventyfive days. On the first day, a statue of Buddha was set up and precious articles and clothing of first quality were distributed. On the second day, an image

of the sun-god was installed and the precious things and garments to half the amount of the previous day were given away in charity. The third day was devoted to the worship of Shiva and gifts of the same value as those of the second day were made. The distribution of gifts and charities thus went on for two and a half months amongst the Buddhists, Brahmins and Jains and all those who were needy and destitute, without distinction of faith or creed. It is said that as many as 500,000 persons received gifts of various kinds. Thus the accumulated treasures were exhausted and in the end Harsha stripped off his royal robes and put on the rags of a poor beggar as Prince Sakyamuni (Buddha) had done when he left his father's home. This, as Hiuen Tsang tells us, the emperor used to do once every five years. If his statement was to be taken literally, we think this sort of munificence must have been a very heavy drain on the finances of the empire, and that the resultant financial breakdown was, probably, one of the main reasons for the sudden collapse of the empire after Harsha's death.

Harsha was a great patron of literature and his court was famous for philosophers, poets, dramatists and painters.

Hiuen Tsang says that the emperor used to spend one-fourth of his income for rewarding men of learning. The emperor himself was a poet of no mean order. He is credited with the authorship of three famous dramas called the Nagananda, the Ratnavali and the Priyadarsika.¹ Among the poets of repute who lived at the court of Kanauj, the most famous was Banabhatta, the author of Harshacharita and Kadambari.

Learning and Literature

Hiuen Tsang has much to say about educational matters both with regard to popular instruction and the higher learning of the monasteries. There was an organised system of popular education. Children began by learning the alphabet and a primer containing twelve chapters. At seven years of age, they passed on to the study of sciences, such as grammar, science of arts and crafts, and the rudiments of logic, philosophy and science of medicine. The method of teaching was oral. The teacher took great pains and the student, in his turn, when he left the seminary rewarded his teacher. To reward a teacher was, in fact, regarded as the first duty of a student. For higher learning, Nalanda was the principal centre in the seventh century. This great monastery, or group of monasteries, was situated some distance south of Patna, or ancient Pataliputra. Hiuen Tsang studied here for several years and has left an impressive account of the magnificence of this university. There were 10,000 students who studied various subjects: Buddhist and Vedic theology and philosophy, law, science, medicine and fine arts. Lectures and discourses were given from as many as a hundred pulpits every day. The head of the university in the days of Hiuen Tsang was Shilabhadra who was a great and versatile scholar.

Shilabhadra

University of Nalanda

The University buildings had a number of splendid lecture halls and residential houses for the use of teachers and students who all lived together like members of one family. Generations of kings and pious men had endowed the university with large funds, consisting of cash and revenue assignments, and it was out of this income that free board and lodging was given to the ten thousand residential scholars.

The recent archaeological discoveries at Nalanda seem to reveal that references to the office of the Chancellor of the University were made by people of all ranks and from all over India. There have been found seals of a sister of Rudrasena, the Saka Satrap of Surashtra; King Bhaskarvarman of Assam; and of the emperor Harsha. In course of time the renown of the University had spread far and wide and its graduates were honoured and respected throughout Asia.

¹Some writers doubt that Harsha was the real author of these dramas. These were composed by a poet named Dhavak for monetary consideration.

Hiuen Tsang was connected with a very well-to-do family of China. He was a man of scholarly attainments and was in the prime of youth when he came to India in A.D. 630. He stayed in the country for about fifteen years and visited almost every part of it in search of Buddhist statues, holy books and relics. He took with him more than 650 manuscripts in Sanskrit to China, many of which were subsequently translated into the Chinese language.

The Chinese pilgrim has given us a faithful, and intelligent account of all that he saw and heard in India. This account, it may be remarked, is much fuller than that of Fa-Hien,¹ and is, indeed, a valuable source of the seventh century history of our country.

Pataliputra, says Hiuen Tsang, was in ruins. Its place was taken by Kanauj² where both Buddhism and Brahmanism were flourishing with a hundred or more monasteries accommodating about a thousand Buddhist monks. Prayag was another important city in northern India where Harsha used to hold his quinquennial assemblies and where the people gathered in lakhs to receive his charities.

With the revival of Hinduism under the Guptas, it appears, the old centres of Buddhism had all fallen into ruin. Sravasti, Vaisali and Kapilvastu, which once boasted of hundreds of monasteries each, were now reduced to small villages with a decaying population.

The pilgrim's remarks incidentally throw light on the economic and social life of the people. Persons following unclean occupations like butchers, fishermen, and scavengers had to live outside the four walls of the city. Even when their work brought them within the city they would 'sneak along on the left as they went about in the houses.' The dress of an average man, it appears, was very simple and involved little or no tailoring work. "The men wind a strip of cloth round the waist and up to the armpits and leave the shoulder bare. The women wear a long robe which covers both shoulders and falls down loose." During the winter months, particularly in some parts of Northern India close-fitting jackets were also used. Gold ornaments like rings, bracelets and necklaces were freely used by both sexes. Speaking of physical purity and the personal hygiene of the people, Hiuen Tsang observes "they are pure of themselves and not from compulsion. Before every meal they must have a

¹ Fa-Hien came to India in A.D. 399 viz. about 230 years before Hiuen Tsang. Both came by the overland route passing through Samarkhand, Balkh, Bokhara and Kabul, but unlike Fa-Hien, Hiuen Tsang returned by land.

² The capital appears to be shifting westwards: Pataliputra, Ayodhya, Kanauj and Delhi.

wash; the fragments and remains are not served up again; the food utensils are not passed on; the utensils that are of pottery or wood must be thrown away after use, but the metallic ones, those made of gold, silver, copper or iron were used after cleansing." In regard to the articles of diet, the Chinese traveller observes, that the common food comprised milk, butter, sugar, rice, parched grain and vegetables. Onions and garlic were little used, and 'people who ate them are ostracized.'

We find references in contemporary literature indicating the status of women in those days. Women of the higher castes observed no *pardah*. The instance of Princess Rajyasri is a case in point. She used to attend the discourses of the Chinese pilgrim and of other Buddhist Doctors of Divinity. The girls, it appears, were married at an early date. Princess Rajyasri was married before she had completed her thirteenth year. Another point worth noticing is the prevailing practice of *Sati*. Harsha's own mother died as a *sati*. His sister was saved from performing that rite only at the last moment, and remained a widow for the rest of her life. Hiuen Tsang also observes that 'a woman never contracts a second marriage.' Of the character and conduct of the people of India in general, Hiuen Tsang speaks with the highest respect and, in a way, confirms what Megasthenes had observed more than nine hundred years ago. ".....they are upright and honourable. In money matters they are without craft, and in administering justice they are considerate. They are not deceitful or treacherous in their conduct, and are faithful to their oaths and promises."

Harsha died in or about the year A.D. 647. He does not appear to have left any heir to his throne which was usurped, after his death, by his minister *Arjuna* with the result that the great feudatory chiefs assumed independence and the whole country north of the Vindhya relapsed into a state of political confusion.

*Estimate
of Harsha*

Harsha Vardhana came to the throne before he had completed the seventeenth year of his age under circumstances which have already been narrated. His father died while the campaign against the Huns was still in progress and his elder brother Rajyavardhana was treacherously killed within a few months of his accession to the throne. The entire burden of the State fell upon the shoulders of young Harsha Vardhana, and, as we have seen, he proved equal to the occasion. He displayed the qualities of a great soldier and a general, subdued and conquered the whole of Northern India and established diplomatic relations with the far off eastern potentate of China. Again, after this career of conquest and violence was over, Harsha, as his biographer Dr. R. K. Mukerjee observes, "soon returned to his

normal state, his true self, and remained as a confirmed pacifist throughout his long reign, the most distinguished follower and preacher of the creed of non-violence in that violent age of warring kingdoms....." Harsha's sympathetic and feeling nature is amply revealed by his acts of charity such as he used to exhibit on the occasion of the quinquennial assemblies at Prayag. His contribution to the domain of literature and the intellectual life of the country in general are no less worthy of admiration. Himself a distinguished author and an erudite scholar, Harsha Vardhana was fond of holding religious and philosophical discussions to which men of all shades of opinion were invited to participate. He was one of the best patrons of men of letters; and it became an almost established practice with him to spend annually one-fourth of the total income from crown lands in rewarding high intellectual eminence. As a king, he had high and lofty ideals of duty and service. We are told by Hiuen Tsang that in his zeal for the performance of good deeds he knew no rest and even 'forgot to eat and sleep.'

NOTES

The seventh century in India, may well be said to be the Age of Harsha. After the Hun invasion about the middle of the 5th century the great empire of the Guptas began to disintegrate, and in the course of the following fifty years Northern India was cut up into a number of small independent kingdoms. Harsha, then, reversed the process. Under him these disintegrating units were, once again, brought under one central authority and the task of rejuvenation of national life which was suspended owing to the invasion of the barbarians was resumed. But, unfortunately, Harsha left no successor and the empire of Kanauj again broke asunder after his death. In his time, the learned Chinese scholar Hiuen Tsang, visited India and has given us a fairly elaborate account of the religious, social and economic conditions of India. After Asoka and Kanishka, Harsha was a great patron of Buddhism.

QUESTIONS

1. Estimate the importance of the reign of Harsha. Also give a brief account of his career.
2. Describe the social, religious and economic conditions of India during the 7th century A.D. with special reference to the evidence of Hiuen Tsang.
3. What place would you assign to Harsha among the patrons of Buddhism?

CHAPTER XII

From Harsha to Shahab-ud-Din Ghorī A.D. 647—1200

Harsha was the last of the great Hindu sovereigns who had, at different times, bestowed political unity upon India. After his death in 647 and till the Muslim occupation of Delhi in 1192 after the battle of Tarain, *The Rajput Age* there is no single thread in the narrative of political history of the country on which facts can be strung. This long period of 550 years is a wearisome chronicle of innumerable states, which were continually being formed, dissolved and formed again. One striking event of the period, however, is the rise of the Rajputs whom we now hear of for the first time. Nearly every kingdom in the country was ruled by a Rajput family and that is the reason why we call it the Rajput Age.

The origin of the Rajputs is still shrouded in mystery; but there cannot be any doubt that they are a mixed race. They include tribes which are of foreign origin. At the same time, many of the Rajput clans are descended from the old Aryan families and represent the old Kshatriya stock. There are still others who are descended from the higher families of indigenous warlike tribes like the Gonds and the Bhils, which were admitted into the Aryan fold as Kshatriyas a thousand years ago. The admission and assimilation of foreigners into its social framework, has been a normal feature of Hinduism throughout its history. The Persians, Greeks, Bactrians, Sakas, Parthians and the Kushans who came and settled in India between 150 B.C. and A.D. 150 were all gradually absorbed into the Hindu population. The Huns, Gurjars, and Jats too, who followed them during the fifth and the sixth centuries, gradually became merged in the general population. It is about the time when these latter foreign invaders and settlers were being taken into the Hindu fold that mention of the Rajputs is made for the first time in Indian literature. This and other relevant facts revealed by modern research have now convinced the scholars that the Rajput caste came into being during the period of political confusion and social reconstitution that followed the break-up of the Gupta empire (A.D. 600-1000). According to this theory the modern Rajputs do not represent historically the old Aryan caste of the Kshatriyas. They rather represent a large social

and occupational group composed of various indigenous, foreign, and mixed races which attained royal rank. Those members of the foreign and mixed tribes who took to tilling and agriculture were assigned to the humbler castes of Gurjars, Jats and Huns, etc.

There were three distinct lines of ancient Kshatriya kings who were popular at the time and from whom every Rajput ruler was proud to trace his pedigree. These were: (i) *The Lunar, the Solar and the Yadava races* The Solar or Sun race, said to have descended from Rama, the hero of Ramayana, (ii) The Lunar or Moon race descended from Puru; and (iii) The Yadava race who claimed descent from Yadu, the brother of Puru. To this race belonged Sri Krishna of the Mahabharata fame.

Now, apart from those Rajput clans who were believed to have actually descended from the old Aryan Kshatriya families some of the ruling families of Gonds and Bhils had also succeeded in connecting their lineage with Rama and Krishna. The difficulty, however, came with the chiefs of those foreign races who had actually come from outside and settled in the country within historic times. By no stretch of imagination could they be connected with the old Solar or Lunar or Yadava races of the Kshatriyas.

The fertile Brahmin brain, accordingly, discovered a mythical origin for them. They said they were Agni Kula or the fire race, and were descended from Agni, or 'born from the sacrificial fire of Brahma.' The story as told by Chand Bardai is that when the kings of the ancient warrior race became wicked they were exterminated by a Brahmin named Parsurama who was an incarnation of Vishnu. There was, thus, no one left to rule the land and the Brahmins soon felt the need of warriors to defend the sacred books. The Brahmins prayed to the gods who came down to Mount Abu, made a big fire pit (Agni-Kund) and lit the sacrificial fire. Out of it there came four warriors namely Parahara, Chalukya (Solanki), Paramara and Chauhan. From them were descended four clans of the same names who were the Agni-Kula Rajputs. The legend, popularly represents a rite of purification (Shuddhi) by fire by which the impurity of these foreign tribes was removed and they became fitted to enter the Hindu caste system. It may also be taken to confirm the historical break between the old Kshatriyas and the new Rajputs.

The heroic tales told by the bards of Rajasthan reveal some of the peculiar traits of character of the Rajputs. Gallant and chivalrous to his very core, a Rajput was never guilty of treachery, cunning or deceit towards his enemy. At times, in dealing with his foe he would rather err on the wrong side of

The Rajput Character and Customs

generosity and suffer disastrous consequences for his too chivalrous conduct. Military daring, reckless personal courage, and a high code of honour both in war and peace are some of the peculiar virtues of a Rajput and these have, indeed, earned for him a glorious name in human history.

A Rajput woman was no less heroic in spirit than a Rajput man. Born and brought up in a family of warriors, a Rajput maiden took delight in listening to songs and stories relating the chivalrous deeds of young Rajput gallants, and when her own turn came for the Swayamvara her choice always fell on the manly and the strong. Honour and self-respect was as dear to her as life—perhaps more. It was this high regard for personal and family honour that gave rise to the fearful rite of *Jauhar* which was practised by them when they saw there was no chance of escape.

Another feature worthy of note in the Rajput society was the feudal system. According to this system, the chief granted lands to his vassals on the condition of military service and the vassal on his part took the oath of service and fidelity to his lord. These feudal ties thus bound together the whole clan for mutual help and co-operation and made it one strong and solid unit. But the system was not free from faults. It engendered narrow clannish feelings and as the subsequent history of the Rajputs reveals, this clan mentality eventually proved fatal to them.

During the seventh and eighth centuries, there seem to have been five chief centres of Rajput clans in Northern India viz. (1) Oudh and Bihar; (2) the Jumna Doab, (3) The Indus and the Chambal valleys; (4) Western Rajputana round Mount Abu and—(5) the Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand districts. It was from these centres, that, on the decline of the royal house of Kanauj, they issued and conquered every kingdom in India. But as the politics of the country were in a state of flux, the boundaries of these states kept on constantly shifting according as the fortunes of their rulers waxed or waned. It is, therefore, difficult and also unnecessary, for the purpose of this book to trace the history of each individual state. All that we propose to do here is to give a brief account of those which have played a more prominent part in the annals of the period.

The Himalayan states protected by their mountain barriers formed a political division by themselves, comprising the three important kingdoms of Kashmir, Nepal and Assam. Of these, the Kingdom of Nepal on account of its peculiar isolated position and that of Assam on account of its remoteness have played little part in the political history of mediaeval India. The

*Centres of
Rajput Clans*

*The Hima-
layan States*

rulers of Kashmir,¹ however, had been contesting with the kings of the Indo-Gangetic States, the supremacy of Northern India. King Darlabh of the Karkota dynasty who was a contemporary of Harsha and his immediate successors extended their sway over the plains below the hills and seized from the Huns the districts of Taxila, Hazara and the Salt range, during the latter half of the seventh century A.D. In the eighth century, another member of this dynasty named Lalitaditya (A.D. 724-60), gave a much wider scope to his ambition and made a bid for the paramountcy of Northern India. He waged war against Yasovarman of Kanauj and defeated and killed him in a battle about A.D. 740. Emboldened by his success, the Karkota ruler next invaded Magadha, Kamrupa and Kalinga. Kalhana, the author of the Kashmir chronicle, further credits him with the conquest of Malwa and Gujarat. But after the reign of Lalitaditya, we hear little or nothing of the achievements of the Karkota family in Northern India. Amongst the monuments of Lalitaditya's reign, the ruins of the noble temple of Martanda may be seen even today near Mattan (Kashmir).

The Karkotas were displaced by the Utpalas. Avantivarman (A.D. 855-83) of this dynasty distinguished himself by his great constructive achievements in which he is said to have been greatly assisted by his engineer minister, Surya. At Avantipura—a town built by the king and named after him—were recently excavated the ruins of two beautiful temples built of stone. Again, the modern town of Sopur (Suryyapur) situated on the banks of the Wooller lake is believed to have been founded and named after the royal engineer who completely drained off and rendered fit for habitation, the marshy area round the lake. The Utpalas were succeeded by the Loharas who ruled for 125 years. The name of queen Didda, a member of the dynasty is another prominent name in the mediaeval history of Kashmir. For quite half a century (A.D. 958-1000) she is said to have dominated the politics of the valley. Her favourite general, popularly named Tunga, is remembered for having led an unsuccessful expedition against Mahmud of Ghazni.

The cultural contact of Kashmir with India has been very intimate. The valley formed an important centre from whence the Indo-Aryan culture was diffused to Khotan and other regions of the Chinese Turkestan.

¹The valley of Kashmir formed a province of the Mauryan empire and later it was included in the dominions of Kanishka. The Hun King Mihiragula ruled over Kashmir when he was banished from the Panjab. But neither the Guptas nor Harsha ever made an attempt to annex Kashmir.

Among the important kingdoms of which the Northern India group of states was formed may be mentioned

Kabul and the Panjab, Sind, Gujarat, Malwa, *Kabul and the Panjab*
Kanauj, Bihar (Magadha) and Bengal. Of each of these we now give a brief account.

The kingdom of Kabul and the Panjab (known as the Gandhara kingdom) was ruled by a dynasty called the Sahi dynasty. These Sahis were the descendants of the Kushans who had continued to exercise their sway in these comparatively secure regions even after the disintegration of their mighty empire in the third century A.D. The last member of the Sahi dynasty was deposed by his Brahmin minister, Kallar who founded his own dynasty known as the Hindu Sahi of Kabul sometime in the closing years of the 9th Century A.D. It was this dynasty to which Jaipal, Anangapal and Trilochanpal had belonged. Their wars with Sabuktigin and Mahmud of Ghazni will be given in the next chapter.

Sind and Baluchistan often formed one political unit in ancient times much as the Kabul and Gandhara countries did in the north. The Rai Siharas are the first line of rulers that we know of. This line was founded by one Divaji about the year A.D. 500 with Alor (near modern Rohri) as his capital. The Arab invaders and the Rais remained at war for a long time in which the latter lost their province of Makran. In or about A.D. 631, the Brahmin minister of the Rai whom the Arab chroniclers call Chach, usurped the throne and founded a new line of kings. Chach, however, proved a much stronger ruler and kept the Arabs at a respectable distance though during the reign of his grandson, Dahir, they invaded the country with success. A more detailed account of these wars will be given in the next chapter.

After the death of Harsha Vardhana, his empire of Kanauj fell to pieces and nothing definite is known of his successors. The next great king who ruled over Kanauj is one Yasovarman. Unfortunately we know *Kanauj under Yasovarman*
nothing about his ancestors.¹ He ascended the throne in or about A.D. 700, but of his family we have no information. Yasovarman was a great ruler and at one time his dominions extended as far as Magadha. He was killed in a battle against Lalitaditya of Kashmir who had invaded Kanauj in 740.

Yasovarman was not only a great soldier but he was also a man of great literary tastes and a great patron of scholars, saints and reformers. Under him and his descendants, Kanauj became the centre of orthodox Hinduism and the Kanauj Brahmins

¹The suggestion that he was descended from the imperial Maurayas or that he was a scion of the ruling house of the Mukharis are only conjectures.

came to be regarded as the leading Brahmins of Northern India. The study of the Vedas and the Vedic philosophy was revived in his time. Kumarila Bhatta, the renowned exponent of Purva Mimamsa, flourished in his time and Kumarila's disciple, viz. the great Sanskrit dramatist Bhavabhuti enjoyed the liberal patronage of Yasovarman. Bhavabhuti's works like *Malati-Madhava*, *Mahavira-Charita* and *Uttar-Rama-Charita* are indeed ranked with first-class literary productions of Sanskrit literature. The poet Vakpatiraja who composed his Prakrit poem *Gaudavaho* in praise of Yasovarman's victories also lived at his court in Kanauj.

Of Yasovarman's successors very little is known. All that we know is that Kanauj came in possession of the Pratiharas in the time of Chakrayuddha. The Pratiharas or

*Kanauj under
the Gurjar-
Pratiharas*

A.D. 800—1018

Pariharas were a branch of the famous Gurjars—one of those Central Asian tribes that had poured into India during the period of political unrest following the disruption of the Gupta empire.

During the decline of Harsha's empire, they had established themselves at three different centres viz. Jodhpur, Avanti (Malwa) and Broach (Gujarat). They had become very powerful at the time of the Arab occupation of Sind (A.D. 712), and it was these Pratiharas who checked the further expansion of the Arabs into the heart of the country. Vatsaraja (A.D. 775-800) of the Avanti line secured the headship of the Pratihara ruling houses. His son and successor, Nagabhata II (A.D. 800—32), made a bid for suzerainty over Northern India, and after entering into alliance with the kings of Kalinga, Andhra, Vidarbha and Sind, attacked Kanauj, deposed Chakrayuddha and seized the imperial city. Dharmapala of Bengal, however, espoused the cause of Chakrayuddha and expelled Nagabhata. A little later, however, the Pratiharas, under their ruler Mihir Bhoja (A.D. 840-90) recaptured Kanauj and made it their capital. During his long reign of fifty years Bhoja extended his sway over Rajputana, the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, the Panjab east of the Sutlej and Gwalior State. Even the rulers of Malwa and Gujarat at one time, acknowledged him as their overlord. The Arab traveller Al Masudi writes in praise of the administration of Bhoja.

The Pratihara empire remained intact under Bhoja's son, Mahendrapala but its fortunes waned under his successors. The Rashtrakutas pressed against the empire from the south, and the minor powers and principalities like the Kachwahas, the Chandelas, the Chedis, and the Chalukyas further scattered and shattered its vast fabric. The last member of this house was Rajyapala who was compelled to submit to Mahmud of Ghazni

in A.D. 1018 and a year later was killed in a battle with the Chandela ruler, Ganda.¹

The Chandelas were, probably, the Hinduized Gonds who had settled in Jijabhukti province between the Jumna and the Narbada sometime in the ninth century after driving out the Gaharwaras. They remained feudatories of the Pratiharas of Kanauj. The first Chandela chief who obtained real independence was Harsha. His son, Yasovarman (A.D. 930-50) greatly consolidated his power by his conquest of the fortress of Kalinjar from the Chedis. Dhanga (A.D. 950-999) the son of Yasovarman, was considered the most powerful king in Northern India at the end of the tenth century. He was invited to join the confederacy against Sabuktigin organised by Jaipal. Dhanga was a lavish builder and adorned his country with many beautiful temples. His son Ganda joined the confederacy of the Hindu princes against Mahmud of Ghazni in 1009 under the leadership of Anangpal as his father had done on a previous occasion against Sabuktigin. When Rajyapala of Kanauj had submitted to Mahmud in 1018, Ganda was so enraged that he attacked Kanauj the next year and slew Rajyapala. After Ganda's death, the fortunes of the Chandelas began to decline, but Maharaja Kirtivarman (A.D. 1050-1100) again restored the independence of the kingdom. His court became a favourite resort of poets and writers. The last ruler of any importance of this dynasty was Parmal Deva who was defeated by Kutb-ud-Din Aibak in 1203 when the forts of Kalinjar and Mahoba were captured by the Muslims.

*The Chandelas
of Jijabhukti
(Bundelkhand)*

This Rajput tribe was very ancient and ruled over the territory which lay to the south of the territory of the Chandelas. Later on, the Kalachuri kingdom seems to have been split into two: one known as the Kalachuri kingdom of Dahala with its principal city at Tripuri (Jubbulpur District); and the other as the kingdom of Maha-Kosala with its capital at Ratanpur. The senior, or the Tripuri branch ruled for about 600 years from A.D. 580 to 1180; and the junior branch of Ratanpur from about A.D. 1100 to 1200.

*The Kalachuris
of Chedi*

The history of the Chedis is a long record of wars both offensive and defensive which they had to wage with the rulers of Malwa, Kanauj, the Palas of Bengal and the Gangas of Kalinga and with the Rashtrakutas and Chalukyas of the Deccan.

¹ Rajyapala's son Trilochanapala fled from Kanauj to Prathisthan (opposite Allahabad), where he began to rule over a small and shrunken remnant of the once mighty empire of the Pratiharas, but ten years later his son, Anangdeva, was deprived of even this little possession by the Chedi king, Gangeya (Delhi). Rajyapala's followers who now settled in Delhi came to be known as the Tomaras.

The most important king of the Chedi dynasty was Gangeya Deva (A.D. 1015-1040). He assumed the title of Vikramaditya and is mentioned as ruler of middle India by the Turkish historians of Sabuktigin and Mahmud. By the close of the twelfth century, the Chedi power had totally declined and their place was taken by the Baghelas after whom the country came to be known as Baghelkhand.¹

Gujarat, called Surashtra in ancient times, has always been an object of great attraction to the rulers of Northern India on account of the extreme fertility of its soil and the great wealth it derived from sea trade. The province owes its present name to the Gurjars who settled in it during the declining years of the Gupta rule. On the collapse of the Gupta power, a Gurjar chief named Bhattarak, who was in the service of the Gupta kings made himself independent at Vallabhi in Kathiawar and founded a dynasty which ruled till A.D. 766. Dhruvabhatta who was married to the daughter of Harsha and had accepted the position of a vassal of the emperor was a descendant of Bhattarak.

While the Vallabhis were supreme in Kathiawar and the easternmost part of Gujarat, the other parts of the peninsula were ruled by another family known as the Chavadas with their capital at Anhilwara. This dynasty came to a sudden close in A.D. 961, and the throne of Anhilwara was seized by one Mulraja Chalukya or Solanki. All that we know about Mulraja is that he was married to the daughter of the last ruler of the Chavada dynasty. He soon began to expand his power. He conquered Kathiawar, Surat, Broach, and Cutch.

It appears from the Jain accounts that, after a life of fighting and conquest, Mulraja devoted his last years to good work. He built numerous temples and gathered at his court learned men from various parts of India. Mulraja died in A.D. 996 leaving a well organized kingdom to his descendants who continued to rule over it for about three hundred years. Mulraja's line ended in A.D. 1242 when the Anhilwara kingdom passed into the hands of the Vaghelas. The Vaghelas had been ministers and feudatories of the Chalukyas and traced their descent from one Anaka, the son of a sister of the Chalukya ruler, Kumarpala. It was from the Vaghela ruler, Karnadeva (A.D. 1296-1304) that the Muslims conquered the country.

The Paramaras of Malwa like the Chalukyas of Gujarat belonged to the Agni Kula race and founded their power near Mount Abu early in the ninth century. The Paramaras remained subordinate to the Pratihara kings of Kanauj for a long time,

¹The Baghelas were a branch of the Chalukya family who ruled at first in Anhilwara (Gujarat). Eight of the Baghela kings also known as the Vaghela Chalukyas ruled till the close of the thirteenth century.

but on the decline of the latter broke away from the Imperial authority and organized their material and military resources. Vakpati II, also known as Munja Raja (A.D. 947-97) of this dynasty was a great soldier and an accomplished scholar. *The Paramaras of Malwa*

He is credited with having won victories over the Karnatas, Latas (Gujarat), Kalachuris, Cholas, and Keralas of the extreme south. He is said to have successfully invaded the Chalukya territory six times, but in his seventh expedition in A.D. 997, his army was cut to pieces and he himself was put to death in a barbarous manner by the order of the Chalukya king, Tailapa.

The best known ruler of this dynasty was Bhoja I who reigned for forty years from 1020 to 1060. He is still famous in Indian tradition as a great patron of literature and astronomy. A large number of poets and scholars lived at his court. Some of his own literary works still survive and include writings on poetry, astronomy, politics and architecture. Bhoja was a great builder and is said to have built many tanks, reservoirs and lakes for purposes of irrigation and a big university building for Sanskrit studies at his capital, Dhara. As a soldier and warrior, Bhoja yields to none of his Paramara predecessors. He kept up a successful struggle against the old rivals of his house, the Latas, the Chedis and the Chalukyas, and ultimately succumbed in a fight with the united forces of the Latas and the Chedis. After Bhoja, the dynasty began to sink into the insignificant position which it continued to occupy during the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries. The last ruler of the Paramara house Bhoja II was defeated by Ala-ud-Din Khalji in A.D. 1305.

The Agni Kula tribe of the Chauhans carved out a little principality in the neighbourhood of the Sambhar lake sometime during the sixth century A.D. One of them, named Ajayadeva, is said to have founded and fortified the town of Ajmer early in the twelfth century.

Another well-known ruler of this dynasty was Visaladeva also known as Vighraharaja, who further extended the ancestral territories by seizing Delhi from its Tomara ruler, Anandpal, about the middle of the twelfth century. *The Chauhans of Ajmer and Delhi*

Prithviraj is the most celebrated of the Chauhan kings and is a great figure in the popular literature of Rajputana. His romantic marriage with Sanyogita, the daughter of Jai Chandra Gaharwara of Kanauj forms a favourite theme of the bardic tales and songs of Rajasthan. Prithviraj was defeated by Shahab-ud-Din Ghori, after which the Chauhan possessions passed into the hands of the Muslims.

Another great Rajput house ruled Mewar. This house is popularly known as the Sessodia house and boasts of an un-

broken descent from the Solar race. The progenitor of this illustrious family was Bapa Rawal who is credited with repulsing the repeated invasions of Rajputana by the Arabs. His son, Guhila, captured Chitor, which subsequently became the capital of the kingdom of Mewar. The famous heroes of Rajasthan like Rana Sanga and Rana Partap belonged to this house.

*The Guhilots
of Mewar*

On the collapse of the Gurjara-Pratihara empire of Kanauj with the death of Rajyapala, power seems to have passed for the time being into the hands of various petty dynasties of which little is known. By the end of the eleventh century, however, the Gaharwara clan of the Rajputs had established itself securely in this territory. Already master of Benares and Ayodhya, Chandradeva Gaharwara¹ (1085-1102) extended his dominions over the greater part of the Jumna-Ganga Doab. His son, Madanapala who reigned from 1102 to 1112 was equally successful in his career, and further extended his possessions. But the greatest of the Gaharwara family was Govinda Chandra who revived, during his long reign of forty-three years (1112-55), the past glory of Kanauj. He extended his conquests in the east to Patna and in the south to the frontiers of the kingdom of the Kalachuris. The last ruler of the dynasty was Jai Chandra (1170-93). In A.D. 1193 Shahab-ud-Din Ghori invaded Kanauj. Jai Chandra was killed in the action, his army fled in disorder and the kingdom of Kanauj passed into the hands of the Muslims. The Gaharwara clan then migrated to Rajputana where they founded the kingdom of Jodhpur.

*The Gaharwaras
of Kanauj*

In the opening years of the seventh century we hear of one Sasanka as the king of Gaur or Central Bengal who had foully killed Rajyavardhana, the elder brother of Harsha Vardhana. This Sasanka was, probably, a descendant of the Imperial Guptas. After his death, Bihar and Bengal appear to have been divided into a number of small chiefships each with slender resources. The country thus became the prey of its neighbours. It was overrun by the rulers of Kanauj from one side and by those of Kamrupa (Assam) from the other. About the middle of the eighth century, wearied of this state of anarchy, the people of Bengal are said to have elected one Gopal (A.D. 765-770) as their king. Gopal was, probably, a Rajput of the solar line from Oudh. His son and successor, Dharmapala (A.D. 770-815) was, however, the real founder of the greatness of the Pala dynasty. He considerably extended the bounds of his small kingdom till the whole of Bihar and a large portion of northern and western Bengal were included in it. Devapala

*The Palas of
Bengal*

¹The dynasty of Chandradeva is also known as the Rathor dynasty.

who succeeded Dharmapala, ruled for about forty years. He followed the aggressive military policy of his father and added Orissa and Assam to the expanding kingdom of Bengal. He is considered the greatest of the Pala rulers. He was a munificent patron of learning and a great builder of the Buddhist monasteries.

After the death of Devapala (A.D. 855), the power of the Palas ebbed gradually as a result of the onslaughts of the Pratiharas of Ujjain, until all that was left of the once splendid kingdom of the Palas was western and southern Bengal.

The fortunes of the dynasty were temporarily restored under Mahipala (A.D. 992-1040), the ninth in succession to Gopala. He recovered the whole of Magadha, Tribhukti and Eastern Bengal and revived art and learning in his kingdom. Shortly after Mahipala's death, however, the eastern part of the kingdom permanently passed into the hands of a new line of rulers known as the Senas; and the remnants of the kingdom were further weakened by the invasions of the Kambojas and the Gaharwaras. It was while in this tottering condition that the Pala kingdom eventually succumbed to the Muslims towards the close of the twelfth century.

The Palas ruled over Bihar and Bengal with varying fortune for over four hundred years. During their period of rule, eastern India witnessed considerable intellectual activity. The Buddhist monasteries were centres of learning. The Pala kings also constructed large number of works of public utility. Sculpture and painting also flourished during their rule.

The Pala kings were all Buddhists. In fact, during and after the ninth century, when Buddhism was pushed out of the remaining parts of India by the Brahmin revivalists like Kumarila and Shankaracharya, it was in Bihar that it sought shelter under the patronage of the Pala kings. The seat of power of the Pala kings was Pataliputra.

The Sena rulers of Bengal originally belonged to the Kanarese district of the Bombay presidency. They settled in Bengal, probably, during the invasions of that kingdom by the Chalukya ruler Vikramaditya. Sometime *The Senas of Bengal* in the opening years of the twelfth century, the Sena leader Vijaya Sena (A.D. 1100-65) set up a small principality in western Bengal and later on, taking advantage of the growing weakness of the Pala kings, he and his immediate successors strengthened their position. Lakshmana Sena, the grandson of Vijaya Sena, was the most powerful king of the Sena dynasty. He extended his dominions to Benares and Prayag in the west, Assam in the east and Jagannath Puri in the south. But he was not destined to enjoy his gains. The Muslims under Kutb-ud-Din Aibak and Bakhtiyar Khalji overran northern India and Lakshmana Sena's power was swept away before this blast in the closing years of the twelfth century.

The Sena kings subscribed to the Brahminic creed as opposed to the Pala kings who were followers of Buddhism. Nadia was the capital of the Sena kings.

NOTES

From the death of Harsha (A.D. 647) to the occupation of Delhi by the Muslims (A.D. 1192), the history of India is a wearisome chronicle of a number of states which were continually being formed, dissolved and formed again. Of these, the more important ones which may be said to have played a conspicuous part in the political and cultural history of India were: (i) Kanauj (ii) Bundelkhand (iii) Gujarat (iv) Malwa (v) Delhi and Ajmer (vi) Mewar and (vii) Bihar and Bengal.

Kanauj. Even though Harsha's empire had vanished, the city of Kanauj continued to be regarded as the imperial city of Hindustan. It occupied the position which Pataliputra did under the Mauryas and the Guptas and which Delhi came to occupy under the Muslims. The kingdom of Kanauj had three well-marked periods in her history viz. (a) of 50 years under the great Yasovarman, (b) of 200 years under the Pratiharas and (c) of 100 years under the Gaharwaras. During the first, Kanauj provided a rallying centre for the revived Hinduism and produced reformers like Kumarila Bhatta and poets like Bhavabhuti. During the second, it kept in check the forces of disruption and also effectively blocked the expansion of the Arabs from Sind further eastwards. The third and the last period was a period of the waning glory of Kanauj. Towards the close of this period it lost its position as a seat of Hindu power, in 1194, when Jai Chandra lost the day against Shahab-ud-Din Ghorī.

Bundelkhand. Taking advantage of the declining power of the Pratihara rulers of Kanauj, their feudatories who were ruling over the regions between the Jumna and the Narbada became independent and set up their own ruling houses. These were the Chandelas of Jijabhukti (Bundelkhand) and the Kalachuris of Chedi (Baghelkhand). Of the two the Chandelas proved to be more resourceful and their country of Bundelkhand became a land of beautiful buildings both religious and secular, under Maharaja Dhanga Chandelā. The last ruler of this dynasty was deprived of his political power by Kutb-ud-Din Aibak in A.D. 1203.

Gujarat. After the overthrow of the houses of Vallabhi and the Chavadas, almost the whole of Gujarat was brought under his sway by Mulraja Chalukya (A.D. 961—97). The Chalukyas turned to their advantage, the weakness of the Pratiharas of Kanauj and extended and strengthened their dominions. The kingdom of Gujarat flourished under the Chalukyas and various centres of trade and commerce were developed in western India during the three hundred years of the Chalukya rule. The Chalukyas were succeeded by the Vaghelas and it was from Karnadeva Vaghela that the Muslims wrested the peninsula of Gujarat in A.D. 1304.

Malwa. Another powerful kingdom which sprang up on the ruins of the Pratihara empire of Kanauj was that of the Paramaras of Malwa. Although, as soldiers and warriors the Paramaras yield to none of their contemporaries, yet their contributions of permanent value are to be

found in the domain of science and literature. Both Munja Raja and Raja Bhoja were great patrons of learning; and Dhara the capital of Malwa was a flourishing centre of Sanskrit studies.

Ajmer, Delhi and Mewar. Among other independent kingdoms in the Midlands founded on the ruins of the Pratihara empire of Kanauj were the Chauhan kingdoms of Ajmer and Delhi and the Guhilot kingdom of Mewar (Chitor). The rulers of both have played an important part in the political and military history of India. Prithviraja Chauhan fought stubbornly against the Ghori invader though his final defeat in A.D. 1192. led to the establishment of Muslim political power in the country. The Guhilots have a proud military record to their credit. The famous Rajput heroes like Bapa Rawal, Rana Sanga and Rana Partap all belonged to the house of Mewar.

Bengal and Bihar. The Palas of Bihar and Bengal were contemporaries of the Pratiharas of Kanauj; and, on the whole, were able to maintain their position with advantage in respect of the latter. Their period of rule extending over 400 years proved a source of blessing for eastern India so far as the religious and cultural progress of the country was concerned. The Pala rulers were great patrons of Buddhism and it was in the Buddhist monasteries in this part of the country that art and learning was nursed in the mediaeval age. Both the Palas and the Senas of Bengal were made to quit their seats of power by the Muslims in the closing years of the 13th century.

Origin of the Rajputs. We hear of the Rajputs for the first time during the 7th century. Their origin is still a matter of controversy. Many of the Rajput clans are descended from the old Kshatriya stock and trace their pedigree to (i) Rama Chandra, the hero of Ramayana (the Surya Vanshi), (ii) King Puru (the Chandra Vanshi), and (iii) King Yadava (the Yadava Vanshi). There are others who are descended from the ruling families of the warlike clans of Bhils and Gonds which were admitted into the Hindu fold a thousand years ago. There are still others who are collectively grouped as the Agni Kula Rajputs. These represent foreign races like the Greeks, Sakas, the Parthians, Gurjars, Jats and Huns who had settled in India and were admitted into Hindu society. (For fuller discussion look up pages 197-199 of the text).

QUESTIONS

1. Who were the Pratiharas? Briefly describe the history of Kanauj under them.
2. Write a note on Raja Bhoja of Malwa.
3. Estimate the value of the work of the Pala rulers of Bihar and Bengal.
4. Explain the origin of the Rajputs and describe some of the important features of their social organization.

CHAPTER XIII

The Dynasties of the Deccan and the Far South A.D. 600—1200

In very early times a number of Aryan tribes had gradually found their way from Northern into Southern India through the river valleys.¹ Later on, they were followed by some of the foreign invaders from Central Asia, who had, in the first instance, settled in the Panjab, Sind and Gujarat. In the course of several centuries these two classes of immigrants mingled with the Dravidians and other old races of the peninsula and some of them succeeded in carving out principalities for themselves. None of them, however, succeeded in founding an empire which endured for long or which could reconcile the mutually antagonistic and warring elements. Several kingdoms flourished either simultaneously or in succession to one another; as they were more or less isolated from the rest of the world, their history can never possess more than local interest. In what follows an attempt is made to give only summary notices of a few prominent kingdoms and important personages with a view to facilitate the understanding of subsequent events.

The Pallavas, the first to claim attention in historical order, seem to have come into prominence early in the third century on the collapse of the Andhra empire.² Our knowledge of the political activities of these people is solely derived from epigraphic sources.

The pallavas One section ruled from Vatapi or Badami in the west of the Deccan for about two hundred years, from where the Chalukyas under Pulakesin I dislodged them in or about A.D. 550. Another section dominated the Vengi country in the east till about A.D. 610, when the Chalukyas under Pulakesin II drove it out from here as well. It was the third section with its capital at Kanchi, however, which was the most powerful and which was

¹References in Sanskrit literature show that some of the Aryan settlements in the south (Kalinga and Berar) were made as early as the 7th century B.C. and the route taken by these colonists was the eastern coast route. Later on, the Vindhyan passes were crossed over and fresh settlements were made in Maharashtra country. The communications having been established the Buddhist and the Jain missionaries, at a still later date, carried the torch of civilization from the north to the south.

²The origin of the Pallavas is a subject of great controversy. It has not been established whether they were a foreign tribe of Parthian origin or they were one of the old Indian races living in the south since the dawn of history.

able to maintain its integrity well nigh into the middle of the eighth century. The rulers of this dynasty conquered the whole of the Tamil country and established their sovereignty over the Cholas, the Cheras and the Pandyas of the far south. Even Ceylon is said to have felt the weight of their arms.

Protracted hostilities with varying fortune marked the relations between the Pallavas and the Chalukyas. They had their inevitable reaction in weakening the resources of the former and lowering their prestige. In the closing years of the ninth century, the Pallavas succumbed to the Cholas and their power came to an end.

Although the very name of the Pallavas was not known to history till a few years ago, yet the series of monuments which they have left us show that art and culture flourished under their rule to a degree that can hardly be paralleled elsewhere in India. The caves, the rock-cut temples, and the large irrigation tanks built by the Pallava kings are amongst some of the standing monuments of their period of rule. A number of eminent scholars and authors of Sanskrit poetic and dramatic works flourished at the court of the Pallava kings. Kanchi, under the rule of the Pallavas, attained the position of a great literary centre to which students desirous of completing their Sanskrit studies flocked from far and near. Hiuen Tsang, who visited Kanchi in A.D. 640, writes that "the soil was fertile and well-cultivated, and yielded crops of grain and fruit and flowers. The climate was hot, and the people were brave, honest, and truthful. The learned were held in high esteem. There were 10,000 Buddhist monks, many Jains, and eighty Brahmin temples. Kanchi was a fine well-built city, five miles round."¹

The Pallava Art

The Chalukyas or Solankis were a widely diffused tribe² and while one line of them exercised dominion over Gujarat, others had succeeded in penetrating into the Deccan and establishing their power at several centres there. One of these latter was known as the Western Chalukyas of Badami, another as the Chalukyas of Kalyani, while a third has been styled as the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi.

The Chalukyas of the Deccan

The founder of the fortunes of the Western Chalukyas of Badami was Jaya Simha, who made himself conspicuous by seizing from the Rashtrakutas the territory round modern Bijapur. He fixed his capital at Badami. No great progress, however, seems to have been attained until the accession to

¹ Quoted from E. Marsden's *History of India, Hindu Period*, page 252.

² The origin of the Chalukyas has not, so far, been precisely determined. Indian traditions indicate that they were a Kshatriya race who migrated from northern India whereas Dr. V. Smith believes that the Chalukyas were a branch of the Gurjars, hence foreigners.

power of Pulakesin I (A.D. 550-67), who overpowered the Pallavas, conquered from them the territory as far south as Kanchi (Conjeeveram) and seized their capital, Vatapi or Badami. The Chalukya power rose to its high water mark under Pulakesin II (A.D. 606—48) the seventh in succession from Jaya Simha. Great in military prowess as well as in the arts of peace, this mighty ruler's name is one to be conjured with in the chronicles of the seventh century. He was a contemporary of Harsha, whom he rivalled in achievements. His sway extended over the whole of the peninsula and he was as fittingly the 'Lord of the South' as his great peer (Harsha) was the 'Lord of the North.' In A.D. 620, when Harsha attempted to conquer the Deccan, this prince advanced boldly and forced him to conclude a treaty, maintaining the Narbada as the frontier between the two empires. — Hiuen Tsang, who visited the southern empire, records a most flattering description of the power and administration of the king. The fame of Pulakesin II also reached Persia and Khusru II of that country is said to have sent an embassy to him in return of the one he had received from his Indian contemporary. The power of the dynasty declined in the middle of the eighth century, when the Rashtrakuta chief, Dantidurga, seized Badami and made himself master of Maharashtra.

The Chalukyas of Badami were the followers of the Brahminic faith but they bestowed their patronage equally upon the Jain and the Buddhist Sanghas. Ravikirti, the celebrated Jain author speaks of having obtained the greatest patronage from Pulakesin II. *Patronage of Religion and Art* Hiuen Tsang says "there were more than one hundred Buddhist monasteries and more than 5000 resident monks of both Vehicles within the Chalukya kingdom."

The Eastern Chalukyas, also known as the "Lords of Vengi" ruled over the Andhra country and a portion of Kalinga for about five hundred years. This line was founded by Vishnu Vardhana, the younger brother of Pulakesin II who was sent out as governor of the eastern provinces of his empire. Vishnu Vardhana remained loyal to his brother but his son Jayasingha asserted his independence and founded a new line of rulers. His descendants continued to hold sway over these territories from their capital at Vengi for about five centuries. *The Chalukyas of Vengi*

Of the early history and the rise of the Rashtrakutas¹ no precise information is available. They rose into prominence under

¹The Rashtrakutas had lived, as self-governing clans in Maharashtra from very early times and were, probably permitted a measure of self-government by the Andhras, the Saka satraps and the Chalukyas who had all ruled in turn over western India.

their redoubtable leader, Dantidurga, in the middle of the eighth century. The Rashtrakuta kingdom was founded on the ruins of the Chalukya empire and lasted for about two centuries and a quarter, from A.D. 754 to 975. Of the twelve kings who ruled during this period, Dantidurga is considered as the most powerful. He subjugated the whole of the northern Deccan. Krishna I, the second king of this dynasty, further enlarged the territories and built the marvellous rock-cut Shiva temple at Ellora. Govinda, the grandson of Krishna I, was perhaps the greatest monarch of the dynasty and extended his power from the Vindhya mountains in the north to Conjeeveram in the south. The last king of the Rashtrakuta dynasty was Kaka, who was overthrown by Tailapa of the Chalukya house in A.D. 973. The Chalukyas thus regained possession of the Deccan once more.

The Rashtrakutas

The Rashtrakuta kings were great patrons of the new Hinduism and a large number of temples dedicated to Shiva and Vishnu were built during the period of their rule.

The magnificent Kailash temple at Ellora with its chambers and pillared halls cut out of the solid rock was built in the reign of Krishna I.

Art and Learning

They were equally munificent in granting liberal allowances to poets and scholars who flocked to their court. This encouraged learning both in Sanskrit and in the vernaculars. The Kanarese poetry, in particular made great strides under the patronage of the Rashtrakuta kings. In matters of religion and foreign policy, the Rashtrakuta family of rulers seem to have been tolerant. The Arab writers and travellers whom they freely employed in their services as governors of cities and collectors of revenues speak highly of them.

Tailapa, the founder of the later Chalukya house was, probably, a feudatory of the Rashtrakutas. Taking advantage of the weakness and imbecility of his master he boldly attacked the capital, seized it and mounted the throne. His successors, who continued to rule over the western Deccan from 973 to 1185, are known

The later Chalukyas

as the later Chalukyas in order to distinguish them from the old Chalukya family of Badami and also from the Eastern Chalukyas, who ruled over Vengi. Their capital was at Kalyani, now in the territory of the Nizam of Hyderabad. We have the names of seven kings of Tailapa's dynasty, whose record consists of great wars which they waged against the rulers of Anhilwara and Malwa in the north and against the Yadavas, the Kadambas and the Hoysalas in the Deccan.

The most famous king of this dynasty and one whose tenure of power is the most glorious in the annals of the later Chalukyas was Vikramanka, popularly known as Vikramaditya (A.D. 1076

to 1126). The historian Bilhana, who resided at his court, gives a glowing account of the reign of his patron in the poem called *Vikramankdeva Charitra*. The dynasty declined after Vikramanka's death and was superseded in the sovereignty of the Deccan by the Yadavas of Devagiri, the Hoysalas of Dwarasamudra and the Kakatiyas of Warangal.

The Yadavas of Devagiri are credited with a long pedigree, but their epigraphic records do not go beyond the eleventh century

*The Yadavas
of Devagiri*

(A.D. 1100-1318)

A.D., when their local chiefs acknowledged the overlordship of the Western Chalukyas. The first member of this family, who assumed the title of a paramount sovereign, was Bilhana, who styled himself as Bilhana III. He is said to have seized the eastern and northern portions of the territory of his Chalukya overlord in or about 1185. His successors were engaged in warfare with the Kakatiyas of Warangal and the Hoysalas of Dwarasamudra, the two other powers which were contending for political hegemony over the Deccan. The Yadavas retained their power for nearly a century when the dynasty was brought to an end by the Khalji rulers of Delhi.

The Hoysalas, who like the Yadavas and the Rashtrakutas claimed descent from the lunar race of the Kshatriyas, ruled over the Karnataka or Kanarese country now

The Hoysalas

called Mysore. Their capital was Dwarasamudra, now called Halebid. Like the Yadavas of Devagiri, they obeyed the Chalukyas in the beginning, but became independent as soon as the power of their suzerains declined. The first Hoysala ruler to assume independence was Vira Ballala II (A.D. 1172-1210). Vira Ballala, after consolidating his family estates, invaded the territory of the Chalukyas of Kalyani, defeated the Kalachuris and then, marching north, defeated the Yadava ruler of Devagiri. The last ruler of this dynasty was Vira Ballala III (A.D. 1292-1317), in whose reign Malik Kafur invaded the Hoysala kingdom.

The Hoysala kings were great patrons of art and spent lavishly in beautifying their capital, Halebid. The famous Halebid temple is said to have taken 200 years in building.

The Kakatiyas of Warangal ruled for several centuries in the country lying between the Godavari and the Krishna and were at first vassals of the Chalukyas. The first in-

*The Kakatiyas
of Warangal*

dependent ruler of the dynasty was Tribhuvana Malla, who reigned in the closing years of the eleventh century. He was succeeded by his son, Prola Raja, who built the new capital at Warangal. Rudradeva and Mahadeva, the third and the fourth rulers respectively, were, in succession, involved in a fitful struggle with the neighbouring rulers of Orissa and Devagiri. Ganpatideva, the fifth ruler, realising the great danger from his enemies, strongly fortified the capital.

On his death he was succeeded by his daughter's son, Pratapa Rudra II, during whose reign the kingdom was attacked by Malik Kafur and made to pay heavy exactions. Warangal was ultimately conquered and absorbed into their expanding dominions by the Bahmani Sultans in A.D. 1424.

From very ancient times the part of the Deccan lying to the south of the Krishna was the site of three ancient kingdoms, namely those of the Pandyas, the Cholas and the Cheras.¹ The Pandya kingdom occupied the extreme south and had its ancient capital at Madura; the Chola kingdom occupied the greater part of the eastern seaboard called Coromandel,² with Kanchi as its principal city, while the kingdom of the Cheras comprised the whole of the Malayalam country—the country now known as Travancore, Cochin and Malabar.

*The kingdoms
of the Far
South*

The Cholas and the Cheras continued to share sovereign power between themselves till the middle of the fourth century A.D., when they were dislodged from their position by the Pallavas from the north. The Pallavas were supreme during the three following centuries. About the middle of the eighth century, however, the Pallava supremacy was challenged by the Chalukyas and a prolonged war ensued between the two powers. The Tamil kings, taking advantage of this distracted state of the country, not only succeeded in regaining their lost possessions, but, making a common cause, advanced northwards and inflicted a crushing defeat on the Pallavas in the middle of the ninth century. But they were not destined to enjoy these advantages for long; mutual jealousies were soon aroused and the three powers soon came to be involved in a long war. Of these, the Pandya kings suffered heavy losses. Rajasimha Pandya was defeated and fled to Ceylon, and his capital was occupied by the Chola king, Parantaka.

Parantaka and his successors were able to retain their hold on the Pandya country for nearly three hundred years, when, at the end of that period, the Pandya prince, Maravarman Sundar, not only recovered the ancestral possessions, but also defeated his contemporary Chola ruler, Kulottunga (A.D. 1178-1216), conquered his territory and seized his person.

*The mediaeval
Pandya
kingdom*

Maravarman Sundar's successors dominated the whole of Southern India for the greater part of the thirteenth century. But in the last quarter of that century civil wars and internal dissensions considerably weakened the Pandya empire and exposed it to the repeated raids of the Sultans of Delhi. In

¹References to these kingdoms are found in ancient Indian, Greek and Roman literature.

²Coromandal is the English form of Cholamandalam or the dominion of the Cholas.

1310, Malik Kafur seized Madura, built a mosque in the city and returned to Delhi laden with the accumulated wealth of Pandya rulers. This last blow hastened the downfall of the Pandya kingdom, which was ultimately absorbed by the rising power of the Rayas of Vijayanagar.

Hemmed in between the Pallavas and the Pandyas, the Cholas had not, hitherto, played a prominent part in the politics of Southern India. But the prolonged struggle between the Pallavas and the Pandyas gave them the opportunity, and the Chola kings, Vijayala (864-80) and his son Aditya (880-907) considerably expanded their power at the expense of both. Parantaka I (A.D. 907-55), as said before, defeated Rajasimha Pandya and occupied his capital, Madura, in or about A.D. 920. The most illustrious ruler of this dynasty was Raja Raja Chola (985-1016), who not only made the Chola power supreme over Southern India and Ceylon, but also extended his conquests as far north as Kalinga. Raja Raja's son and successor, Rajendra Chola, continued the aggressive imperial policy of his father and conquered for the Chola empire the Andamans and the Nicobar islands. After the death of Rajendra in or about 1045, the fortunes of the empire began to decline. During the twelfth century, the Hoysala and the Kakatiya princes, hitherto feudatories, asserted their independence and by the end of the thirteenth century the vast fabric collapsed completely and there was the inevitable scramble for the crumbs.

The Dravidian kings, whether the Cheras, Cholas or Pandyas, all appear to have patronised men of learning. We have, accordingly, a considerable quantity of literature in Tamil and the other allied languages which are spoken in Southern India. There used to be a great academy, or college of poets and pandits, in Madura. The literature produced under the auspices of this academy, in fact, forms the principal source of information about the cultural, social and economic history of South India. The population was divided into several classes like the Arvi-var or learned men; the Ula-var or agriculturists; the Ay-ar or shepherds, huntsmen and fishermen. Artisans such as goldsmiths, blacksmiths, potters and carpenters formed a class by themselves and so did the soldiers and the fighting men. The kings and nobles mostly came from the Ula-var class.

The dress of the Tamil people was simple and consisted of only two garments, viz. a dhoti and a turban. Among the principal ornaments used by the Tamil women were bangles, necklaces, armlets, waistbelts and anklets. The diet of the people consisted of rice and flesh. They were also fond of drinking. The kings and

*The mediaeval
Chola kingdom*

*Dravidian
culture and
society*

Dress and diet

princes sometimes indulged in expensive wines 'brought by the Yavanas (Greeks and Romans) in their good ships.'

The ancient Dravidians used to worship snakes, serpents and the spirits residing in trees, and practised many kinds of dances to please these so-called deities. Later on, however, when they came in contact with Brahmin- *Religion* ism, they adopted many of the gods of Aryan theology, such as Indra, Vishnu, Shiva and Varuna. In course of time, Buddhism and Jainism also penetrated into the Tamil country. The famous Jain saint, Bhadrabahu, migrated from Bihar to Mysore and founded a Vihara which served as an important nucleus for the spread of the Jain faith. Similarly, individual Buddhist missionaries are said to have visited and preached the doctrines of their faith in the Tamil land from time to time. Conjeeveram developed into a big Buddhist centre and in A.D. 640, according to Hiuen Tsang's account, it had nearly ten thousand Buddhist monks residing in local monasteries.

Under the Pallavas, Hinduism made great strides in the Tamil country and a large number of Hindu temples were built. The revivalist movement under Shankara and Ramanuja gave a further stimulus to the spread of Hinduism among the Tamil nations of the south.

The Tamil country was rich in spices and also in ivory, pearls and precious stones. Muslins, silks and felts were amongst their special manufactures. These valuable articles were exported to Egypt and Arabia on one side *Trade and commerce* and to the Malay Archipelago and China on the other; and the foreign gold, particularly from Rome poured into South India. Pliny, a writer of the first century A.D., tells us that "every year goods worth about 75 lakhs of rupees were taken to India, sold there, and other goods brought back, which were sold for 100 times what they cost." He rather laments that the Roman gold was poured into India in payment for luxuries in which the Roman aristocracy indulged.¹ The Roman merchants had regular colonies in the sea ports of Southern India and one such is mentioned by a Tamil writer at Kaveripaddinam.²

¹ Large numbers of gold and silver Roman coins of the first and second centuries A.D. have been dug up in several places in South India.

² Besides the trade relations, the Tamil rulers seem also to have maintained diplomatic relations with the Roman emperors. A Pandya king of the first century B.C., is said to have despatched two friendly embassies to the court of the Roman emperor, Augustus Caesar. Some of the Pandya kings had Roman soldiers in their service and employed them as bodyguards. A Tamil poet, when referring to the Roman bodyguards of his king, says "the king's tent was guarded by powerful Yavanas whose stern looks strike terror into every beholder. They wear long tunics fastened at the waist by belts. These *Malechas* are clad in complete armour; they can talk only by gestures, and they keep close watch the whole night long in the outer chamber."

The bulk of the population lived in small villages and a number of villages were combined to form an administrative unit called Kurram. A number of Kurrams formed a district and a number of the latter, in their own turn, formed a division or *mandalam*. Each of these units was placed under an officer of the government, while the biggest administrative unit was in the charge of a member of the royal family. The government of the Kurram was in the hands of the village assembly which combined both deliberative and executive functions and was empowered to pass even the sentence of death on confirmed criminals. Land revenue formed the principal source of income to the State, although a number of other taxes and cesses are mentioned in the contemporary literature.

*Dravidian
system of Ad-
ministration*

An extensive system of irrigation existed in the Tamil country, and some of the Chola kings spent large sums of money in building dams across the rivers and providing flood channels so that the waters of the river Kaveri might be utilized to irrigate the soil.

NOTES

After the collapse of the Andhra empire early in the 3rd century A.D. the Deccan witnessed the rise of many a small independent power, as Northern India did in later years (after Harsha). The earliest of these which, in subsequent years, gathered considerable strength was that of the Pallavas. The Pallavas spread their dominions far and wide; and ruled from three centres, namely, Vatapi (southeast of Kolhapur) in the west, from Vengi in the east, and from Conjeeveram in the south. The dynasty counted several powerful kings who were not only warriors, but also patrons of art and learning (see under Pallava art and culture). Of the three branches of the Pallavas, that of Conjeeveram was most powerful and continued to rule for a very long period of 450 years. The second important dynasty of Southern India was the Chalukya dynasty whose kings waged a prolonged war against the Pallavas and ultimately succeeded in ousting the latter from all the three centres of their power.

The most important of the Chalukya kings were Pulakesin I (A.D. 550-567). and Pulakesin II (A.D. 606-642). The former had snatched power from the Pallavas of Vatapi (circa A.D. 550) and the latter from the Pallavas of Vengi (circa A.D. 615). Vikramaditya II another Chalukya king, may be said to have completed the family policy, when he crushed the Pallavas of Conjeeveram in A.D. 740. As their power extended across the whole of the Deccan from east to west, the Chalukyas too, came to have two centres; one at Vatapi which they renamed as Badami and the other at Vengi.

The Chalukyas of Badami continued to wield power for 200 years till the last of the family was defeated and killed by the Rashtrakuta chief Dantidurga in A.D. 754. The Rashtrakutas thus came to succeed the Chalukyas in western India. The Rashtrakutas had lived as self-governing clans in Maharashtra from very early times and were, probably, permitted a measure of self-government by the Andhras, the

Saka satraps and even the Chalukyas who had all ruled in turn over western India. The Rashtrakutas spread their power in all directions, north, south, and east, and maintained it for 200 years. Some of the kings of this vigorous dynasty had both wealth and leisure to attend to works of art. The famous Ellora temple, with its beautiful pillared halls, cut out of solid rock was the work of Krishna I.

The Rashtrakuta dynasty was overthrown (circa A.D. 973) by Tailapa who traced his decent from the Chalukya kings. The dynasty which he founded, is therefore known as the dynasty of the later Chalukyas. Tailapa's dynasty continued to rule from their capital Kalyani for about 200 years over a wide country.

When the power of the later Chalukyas showed symptoms of decay, the younger and more powerful clans of the Yadavas, the Hoysalas, and the Kakatiyas from within the empire cut off slices of territory and set up their independent rule. The Yadavas established themselves at Devagiri, the Hoysalas in the Kanarese country (Mysore) and the Kakatiyas at Warangal and enjoyed independence for about 300 years when each in turn was blown before the blast of the Muslim invasion from Delhi.

Southern India was divided, since very ancient times, by the three powers, namely the Pandyas, the Cholas, and the Cheras. The early history of these kingdoms cannot be precisely traced, but it can be built upon comparatively surer footings from the 9th century A.D. onwards. Of the three, the Chola kingdom was situated more towards the north and lay on the Coromandal coast with its capital at Conjeeveram. Thus, it fell an easy prey to the expanding power of the Pallavas who seized the Chola capital (3rd century A.D.) and reduced the Chola kings to the position of feudatories. In A.D. 740 when the Pallava power declined, the Cholas again began to gather strength and since then continued building up their power under their able rulers. As the result of their efforts, the Chola kingdom, at one time became supreme in southern India, rendered Ceylon as its tributary, and advanced its limits as far as Kalinga in the north. The most illustrious ruler of the dynasty was Raja Raja Chola whose memory will survive so long as the great temple of Tanjore continues to exist. The Chola kings had also a good navy. They retained their independence till Malik Kafur defeated and deprived the last Chola ruler of a great portion of his country (A.D. 1310). The adjoining kingdom of the Pandyas, too, came into greater prominence in the middle of the 9th century. Like their Chola neighbours, the Pandyas continued to thrive taking advantage of the weakness of the Pallavas. But after a century or so they were forced to submit to the more powerful Chola princes. The Pandya kingdom, too, was conquered by Malik Kafur (A.D. 1310).

The kingdom of the Cheras comprised the modern states of Travancore, Cochin and the district of Malabar. Its kings did not much meddle with the politics of the South. They rather followed a more quiet channel of trade and commerce and continued to thrive in their own way.

Dravidian Culture. Though they do not appear to have played a very important part in the political history of Northern India, these Dravidian kingdoms had a very large share in establishing and promoting cultural and commercial contacts between India and other parts of Asia and Europe. It was on the southern coasts of India that the

Arabs, Greeks and Roman merchants had set up their regular business centres. Again, some of the Pandya kings employed Roman soldiers in their service in the early centuries of the Christian era. (For fuller account see under trade and commerce in the text.).

QUESTIONS

1. Who were the Pallavas? What part have they played in the mediaeval history of the Deccan?
2. Write a brief note on Pulakesin II.
3. Mention the important kingdoms that were formed on the collapse of the later Chalukya power and say what part they have played in the history of mediaeval India.
4. Write a note on the social and economic organization as it prevailed in the Dravidian kingdoms of the South.

*Indian
Civilization*

CHAPTER XIV

Indian Civilization A.D. 600—I200

In the two preceding chapters we have reviewed the political history of India up to the beginning of the thirteenth century, and in this we shall attempt to present a general view of the life of the people. As in the domain of political life, so also in the sphere of religious and social life, the dominant tendency of the age was segregation, disruption and disintegration. An Arab historian and traveller who visited India in the tenth century, remarks that there were as many as 'forty-two' religions in India. The number 'forty-two' perhaps, signifies only many. Buddhism, as we have observed in an earlier chapter, had ceased to exist as an organized religion, and modern Hinduism had taken its place. But this new Hinduism was not the same as the old Brahminism of the Vedic age. In its popular forms of faith and worship, it differed considerably from the old religion. The old Vedic religion insisted on the worship of Nature's God, modern Hinduism invoked Nature's God in his threefold power as Creator or Brahma, as Preserver or Vishnu, and as Destroyer or Shiva. Vishnu and Shiva became popular with Hindu worshippers and all over the country large numbers of Shiva and Vaishnava orders were founded. Again, in their efforts to reclaim the masses from the Buddhist faith, the Brahmin leaders had incorporated, in their own religion, all those elements of Buddhism which had become popular among the people, such as the principle of Ahimsa, the doctrine of incarnation (*avatar*), and the organization of the Sadhus or *Maths*¹ and the worship of images. The Hindu national heroes like Rama and Krishna were deified and raised to the dignity of gods. Even Gautama Buddha himself was taken into the Hindu pantheon. The result was that legends and tales of the doings of Krishna and Rama spread all over the country and the simple and pious-hearted people of India began to worship them as beneficent personal gods with all the devotion natural to the Hindus. The followers of various faiths—kings and queens and wealthy trading classes alike—vied with each other in building temples to their favourite deities and the whole country was covered with such temples.

¹The most important of these Maths were those set up by Shankaracharya at Puri in the east, at Badrinarayan in the north, at Dwarka in the west and at Shringeri in the south.

*Religious
conditions
of the period—
New Hinduism*

The chief exponents of New Hinduism were Kumaril Bhatta, Shankaracharya, Madhavacharya and Ramanuja. It were these great leaders of Hindu thought who, by dint of ability, scholarship, and of extraordinary debating powers, restored once again confidence of the masses in the supremacy of Hindu religion.

The forces which brought about this religious disintegration were also responsible for the total collapse of the old social order.

Collapse of the old social order

According to the Brahmin ideal, society was divided into four main castes, the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas, and the Sudras. Amongst the first three, the Brahmins took precedence and they also claimed to be the custodians of all spiritual knowledge. It was under the guidance of the Brahmin alone that one could attain salvation or Moksha. Opposed to this was the Buddhist ideal of life which laid stress on the self-efforts of the individual for his or her spiritual salvation, as well as on the equality of man in social life. In their struggle with Buddhism and particularly against the principles of social equality and universal brotherhood of the latter, the Brahmins tightened their bonds of caste and defended themselves by the increased rigidity of caste associations. The result was that in place of the four original castes into which Hindu society was divided, a large number of new castes sprang up.

The castes, or more correctly the sub-castes, came to be associated with birth, occupation, place of residence and other similar

Formation of sub-castes based on occupation

factors. The process of disintegration began, probably, with the Brahmin caste. In addition to the Rigvedi and the Yajurvedi Brahmins as of old, their sub-castes multiplied and they came to be known by their territorial limits as Kanuji, Gaur, Telugu, Konkan Brahmins and so on. Similar subdivisions in the Kshatriya and Vaishya castes soon followed. In course of time, quite a large number of occupational castes such as the carders, weavers, smiths, fishermen, brewers, cowherds, carpenters, etc., which originally started only as craft-guilds came to be considered as distinct sub-castes in society.

The members of an occupational group or caste always looked to the interest of their brotherhood and consequently with the

Their repercussions on social and political life

lapse of time their social and political vision became circumscribed. Although the revived Hinduism, after a continuous struggle for centuries, did succeed in crushing its rival Buddhism, yet the victory was gained at enormous cost. The old order—political, religious and social—was destroyed during the struggle and the new one which was substituted in its place was based on weaker foundations. Thus the forces working in different spheres of national life were all

working for the separation and disintegration of society. Nor had the new Hinduism yet fully recovered from its prolonged struggle against Buddhism, when in the beginning of the eleventh century, the first wave of Islamic invasion swept over northern India.

Our knowledge of the general social life of the period, though still imperfect, is derived from contemporary literature. Women, it appears, enjoyed a position of honour in society and nothing like the rigid seclusion or *Social life and habits* Pardah system of later times can be traced from the current literature. On the other hand, they seem to have cultivated the arts and sciences and entered into discussion with scholars. The great Shankaracharya is said to have been defeated, on one occasion, by a Brahmin lady. Music and dancing were popular recreations among ladies of the higher ranks of society and the daughters of kings and warriors even took lessons in horsemanship. The rites of Jauhar and Sati had come into vogue during the Rajput age and the custom of child marriage, too, had its beginnings during this period.

In the matter of diet, the literature and the current traditions of the age seem to suggest that the Buddhist doctrine of Ahimsa had still a hold on the minds of the people and they refrained from the use of meat as an article of diet. The upper classes of society freely indulged in intoxicating drink. Smoking does not appear to have come into vogue though the use of betel leaves was common.

It is pleasing to observe that the general social and political instability of the age did not affect materially the progress of learning in the country. Scholars and writers continued to do useful work and some well-known *Literature and learning* books dealing with poetry, drama, romance, law, politics, history, science and medicine were written during the period. The Bhattikavya of Bhartrihari and the Gita Govinda of Jaideva form, perhaps, the finest specimens of the poetical works of the eleventh and twelfth centuries A.D. Amongst the writers on drama, the most remarkable is Bhavabhuti who ranks next only to Kalidasa and even excels him sometimes in the force and passion of style. Another famous playwright of Kanauj was Rajashekhar of the tenth century who wrote Karpurmanjari which is regarded as one of the best comedies in Indian literature. The Kathasaritsagara of Somadeva was also composed sometime in the eleventh century. Among the writers on law, medicine and astronomy may be mentioned Vijnaneshvara, the author of Mitakshara, the famous commentary on Hindu law; the renowned physician Vagabhatta; and the astronomer Bhaskaracharya. History was not altogether neglected. Kalhana, the famous historian of

Kashmir flourished in the twelfth century. There were others who wrote biographies of their royal patrons like Bilhana, the author of the life of Vikramaditya VI of the Chalukya dynasty; Ballala who wrote the biography of King Bhoja of the Paramara dynasty; Sandhyakara Nandi who wrote an account of the reign of king Rampala of Bengal and Chand Bardai, the author of *Prithviraj Raso*.

The chief architectural monuments of the period are the temples on which the Rajput rulers spent lavish amounts of money. Surviving examples reveal three distinct

Art styles which are called the Indo-Aryan, the Chalukyan and the Dravidian. Some of the best specimens of the Dravidian buildings are represented by the Rathas of Mamallapuram, the Pallava temples of Kanchi, the Chola temple of Tanjore and the famous caves cut out of solid rocks on the banks of the Krishna. The most famous temples of the Indo-Aryan style are, perhaps, those of Bhuvaneshvara in Orissa and of Khajuraho in Bundelkhand. The finest example of the Chalukyan architecture and stone carving is represented by the famous Halebidu temple which took more than 200 years to build and even then was unfinished. Another beautiful temple in the Chalukyan style is that at Belur. The stone used in building these temples was so good and the carving so skilful that even now, after seven centuries, the images are as sharp and clear as the day they were finished.

With the fall of the empire of Kanauj in the middle of the seventh century, the machinery of the Central government was thrown out of gear.¹ Nor did the kingdoms

Administration which rose on its ruins succeed in evolving an organization which could secure general peace and order in the country. But far away from the seats of governments, the normal tenor of life in villages remained unaffected by the rise and fall of dynasties. The local administration in these villages went on quietly. The elders continued to exercise their customary functions: civil, revenue and criminal. The Panchayat officers would assemble on the village *Chabootra* (platform) to hear and decide civil and criminal suits between parties and the Patwari and the headman would collect the usual one-sixth of the land produce for remittance to the treasury of the king. The economic organization of the village, too, was not largely affected by the prevailing confusion in the political and social life of the country. The village continued to exist as a self-sufficing unit.

Contemporary literature throws little light on the condition of trade and commerce in the country. There is frequent men-

¹In this connection also see pages 240-41 Al-Biruni's Account of India.

tion of centres of production of cotton goods but it is not known whether these were manufactured to supply local needs or were also sent outside the country as in earlier days. There was plenty of wealth in the country. Pearls and precious stones are spoken of as if they were abundant. The Rajput princes led a gay and joyous life, wore gold bracelets bedecked with priceless gems and their women also used to put on costly ornaments. Current literature seldom depicts the life of a man in the street. How the mass of the people lived we have no means of knowing.

*Trade and
Commerce*

One important feature of the national life of the Hindus that had developed, during the period under review, was the practice of making pilgrimages to the holy places.. The practice apparently was originated by the Jains and the Buddhists who gathered at places sacred to the memory of the founders of their faiths. The Hindu literature of the eleventh century is full of references to the fact that men and women from distant places met at their holy places, each at the appropriate season. In course of time the practice of visiting these holy places became a normal feature of the religious life of a Hindu just as it is today.

*Pilgrimages of
holy places*

Recent archaeological discoveries have brought to light, the remains of Indian culture in various parts of Asia, and have established the fact that the Indians were not altogether a 'stay-at-home' people. The missionary activities of the Jain and the Buddhist friars, the commercial enterprises of the Indian merchants, and the daring adventures of some of the younger scions of ruling houses led to the establishment of Indian colonies and settlements in far off lands beyond the seas and the mountains that gird the country all around.

*Spread of
Indian culture
abroad*

The expansion of the Mauryan empire towards the north-west, the missionary activities of Asoka, and the domination of Kushan kings over parts of Central Asia brought India into intimate contact with the rest of the continent. The Buddhist missionaries, under the royal patronage of Kanishka, carried the torch of Indian civilization beyond the Pamirs into Turkistan and the Mongolian regions and eventually established their Sanghas in those countries. Sir Aurel Stein's discoveries in Khotan have proved, beyond doubt, the existence of the Buddhist fraternities in this desert region.

*Cultural centres
in Turkistan*

We have it on the authority of Albiruni, the great Arab scholar that Buddhism prevailed in Khurasan, Persia, Iraq, Mosul and the countries in their neighbourhood. He writes "in former times, Khurasan, Persia, Iraq, Mosul and

*Cultural centres
in Western Asia*

the country up to the frontiers of Syria, was Buddhistic, but the Zarathushtra (Zoroaster) went forth from Azarbaijan, and preached Magism in Balkh. His doctrines came into favour with King Gushtasp and his people. In consequence, the Buddhists were banished from those countries and had to migrate to countries east of Balkh." These are all now centres of Islam.

It was, probably, from Khotan and other centres in Turkistan that the Buddhist and Indian culture was carried to China and

*Cultural centres
in China*

from China to Korea and Japan of which evidence is forthcoming in abundance. Some of the famous Indian scholars and savants went and lived in China and established several cultural centres in that country. The most well-known to fame was Kumarjiva who rendered into the Chinese language more than 100 Sanskrit books. Thus many an important work of Indian literature and philosophy were translated into the Chinese language. Indian Buddhist art of which many a specimen were transported to China also profoundly influenced art in China. Similarly, a large number of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrims came to India from time to time to visit the holy places of their religion. The names of some of these like, Fa-hien and Hiuen Tsang are too familiar to a student of Indian history to merit any special mention here. But there are others, who deserve a notice in this connection. Sung Yun, a devoted Buddhist scholar, came to visit the holy places of Buddha about a century later than Fa-hien. But his narrative is short and his stay, too, was not long. I-Tsing was another Chinese Sanskrit scholar who came to India and spent fifteen years (A.D. 673-87) in the study of Buddhism from original sources at the Nalanda and Sumatra universities and later wrote a book on the Buddhist practices in India.

The colonising activities of the Hindus are, perhaps, more in evidence across the South Indian Seas than in the Mongolian

*Colonies in
South Indian
Seas*

lands. The islands of Java, Sumatra, Borneo and Bali and again some of the regions on the mainland like Siam, Champa, and Kambodia are full of 'splendid monuments of Indian art and culture.' It was in these islands that the Indian princes, merchants and adventurers founded settlements and established their social and cultural institutions. To the towns, rivers and hills in these new settlements, they gave names after those of their dear motherland.

When and under what circumstances, these colonies were actually founded is difficult to say, but, it is surmised that the kingdom of Champa with its capital Amravati was founded sometime in the second century of the Christian era. This colony continued to

*Champa and
Kambodia*

flourish for a period of twelve centuries and served as an important half-way house between the Indian and the Chinese commercial and cultural relations. It suffered a serious setback during the Annamese invasions in the fifteenth century from which it never recovered.

About the same time, another Hindu kingdom named Kambodia was established in the south of Champa. The natural resources of the country, its rich and fertile soil, and its river systems were fully developed by the hardy and industrious colonists during the following three hundred years; and in the eighth century the kingdom of Kambodia reached a stage of high cultural development. The ruins of its magnificent capital at Angkorvat are to be seen even today in the jungles of Kambodia. The famous stone temple of Angkorvat built by king Suryavarman in the 9th century A.D., is an excellent example of the old art, both architectural and sculptural, as it was developed in these lands by the master Indian builders. The temple is an exact square and measures one English mile each way. The temple was dedicated to god Shiva, as the kings of Kambodia subscribed to the Shivite faith. But some of the finds discovered in this Hindu kingdom reveal that Buddhism also flourished in this region at one time or another. The decline of this kingdom began sometime in the thirteenth century.

Siam or the present Thailand came under the Indian influence as early as the third century B.C. Later on, however, the Mahayana form of Buddhism from the neighbouring colony of Kambodia, made its way into Siam. *Siam* The Hindu and Buddhist religious literature, and art considerably influenced the Siamese language, literature and art. The names and titles of the kings of Siam even today reveal traces of Hindu influence.

Some of the South Indian Tamil kingdoms had trade relations with Burma across the Bay of Bengal since very ancient times. The people from Kalinga, both merchants and missionaries, established contact with the people of Burma and also made a few settlements near the coast. But the proper work of conversion began under Asoka when the Buddhist missionaries backed by the Mauryan government established their monasteries in Burma. The whole of Burma today subscribes to the Buddhist faith. *Burma*

Hindu colonies also flourished in Java, Sumatra, Bali and Borneo (Malay Archipelago) where the remains of Indian culture have also been discovered in abundance. The Chinese pilgrim Fa-hien who visited India in the time of Chandragupta Vikramaditya passed through the island of Java on his way home in *Expansion in Malay Archipelago*

A.D. 414. He tells us that Hinduism was in a flourishing condition in this island.

Java, appears to have been colonised in the first century of the Christian era and the first wave of colonists went from Kalinga. Brahminism retained its hold on the people till the 7th century, but later Mahayana form of Buddhism got ascendancy over Hinduism. The Shilendra rulers of Java also became Buddhists and the famous Buddhist shrine of Barabudur was built by one of these kings. With a view to maintain their connection with the Buddhist centres in India, they also contributed liberally to the endowment funds of the Nalanda university.

In Sumatra, Borneo and Bali, Hinduism and Buddhism flourished side by side. Though many traces of Hinduism are not to be found in this group of islands as they exist in Champa and Kambodia yet we find distinct traces of the days when Hinduism and Buddhism were the prevailing religions in these lands.

Mahavamsha, King Vijaya of Bengal conquered and colonised Ceylon circa 500 B.C. and gave the island the name of Sinhala.

Ceylon

Since then Hinduism remained dominant in Ceylon. In the time of Asoka a couple of centuries later, however, the emperor's brother

Mahendra Maurya succeeded in making the ruler of the island a convert to Buddhism. Ever since the people of Ceylon have continued to follow the Buddhist religion.

The story of the extension of Indian culture in these regions is still in the process of reconstruction and is mainly based on the finds that have been unearthed by the Archaeological Department of the Dutch Government. It is possible that further excavations might reveal yet wider extension of the Indian cultural influence in these and the neighbouring countries.

From the available evidence it appears that almost all these Indian colonies—Kambodia and Champa and the Malaya group

*Art and
Religion in
Indian
Colonies*

of islands—were founded, in the beginning, by those who subscribed to the Brahminical faith. Later on, however, the Mahayana school of Buddhism also made its way into some of these Indian settlements and the two often mixed

together and lived amicably.

The same spirit of toleration and fusion is noticed in the works of art in these colonies. The colonial art, in fact, forms a type by itself. Although it went from India and the skilled and unskilled workmen imbibed traditions of their mother country, yet, in their new environments, the Indian engineers and artisans assimilated new ideas and produced works which were different and in some respects assuredly superior to their original standard in India. The temple of Angkorvat in Kambodia and the Buddhist shrine of Barabudur in Java are among the most re-

nowned monuments of the Indian Colonial art both as regards the conception of design and finish and ornamentation.

NOTES

During the period under review, Buddhism was fast crumbling and its place was taken by new Hinduism. Some of the exponents of new Hinduism were the great Kumaril Bhatta, Shankracharya, Madhava-charya and Ramanuja. The new Hinduism was an amalgam of old Hinduism and Buddhism. Such elements from Buddhism which had taken deep roots in the minds of the people and could not be easily discarded such as the doctrine of *avatar*, worship of images and the system of organised monasteries were accepted by the Brahmin leaders of society and presented to the people along with such doctrines and practices of the old Hinduism which were easily intelligible to an average man.

In the social structure, too, a distinct change had come about in the form of multiplicity of castes and the more rigid observance of the caste rules. Small occupational groups or guilds came to take the place of the older and bigger caste-groups. Though the age betrays lack of political acumen in as much as we do not come across bigger states or combination and federation of smaller ones; yet the country was not altogether barren of scholars, thinkers and writers. Centres of learning continued to flourish here and there and we have some of the very fine literary works that were composed during this period of comparative intellectual stagnation. Some of the surviving monuments of the age reveal that the Rajput rulers spent lavishly on buildings both of religious and secular character. Thus the arts of sculpture and architecture continued to flourish even during this period of political decay.

The practices of *jauahr*, *sati* and child marriage were introduced in Hindu society during this period.

QUESTIONS

1. How do you explain the development of new Hinduism? In what respects did it differ from the old Brahminism?
2. Explain some of the changes that came into Hindu social structure during the mediaeval age.

3. What do you know about the spread of Hinduism in South East Asia?

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Subscribed



CHAPTER XV

Muhammadan Invasions of India

SECTION I. THE ARAB OCCUPATION OF SIND

About the same time that the Rajputs rose to power in India, another great power was rising in the far west. This was the religion of Islam founded in Arabia by the Prophet Muhammad A.D. 571-653.

The Arabs before the time of Muhammad were sunk in deep superstition and ignorance. Tribal feuds and warfare were normal features of their social and political life. Besides the worship of idols and images other evils too, had crept into the social and religious life of the Arabs. The Prophet Muhammad, who believed that he had come into this world with a higher and a nobler mission, set himself to improve the condition of society around him, but like all prophets and reformers he found that his task was not easy. The people of Mecca could not reconcile themselves to his doctrine of the worship of one true God and were not prepared to give up their pagan beliefs. He met with a very strong opposition from his people and was, at times, even threatened with assassination. In A.D. 622 Muhammad left Mecca in disgust and went to the neighbouring town of Medina. This event is known as the Hijrat and marks the beginning of the Muslim era. In Medina, Muhammad met with great success. Gradually, the whole of Medina, as well as many other towns and places, accepted his new faith. The exemplary life of the Prophet won him the esteem of his countrymen and before he died at the age of sixty-three the whole of Arabia had accepted the new belief: that there is only one God, the absolute ruler of mankind; that all true believers in Him are equal in His sight and brethren one of another; and that he, Muhammad was the chosen messenger of God.

Muhammad brought a great change in the character of the people of Arabia. His teachings improved their morals and his new religion gave them a rallying point and supplied an everlasting bond of union and brotherhood. The tribal feuds and the perpetual state of warfare were soon banished from the land of Arabia and the Arabs became a united nation under his spiritual and secular leadership. Inspired with zeal, the Arabs felt eager to spread the new faith to other people and

embarked upon a career of conquest; and in less than a hundred years after the death of the Prophet his successors had subdued Syria, Egypt, northern Africa and part of Spain. The second wave of Arab conquest flowed eastwards and swept before it the old effete civilizations of Syria, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Persia and the countries around Afghanistan. But here the lofty walls of the Hindukush checked the further progress of the Arab soldiers and saved India for the time being. However, by the close of the first quarter of the eighth century, a magnificent empire, stretching from the Atlantic to the frontiers of India owned the supremacy of the Khalifa of Baghdad.

The religious belief of Muhammad was diffused as widely as the conquests of his votaries had extended. Egypt had surrendered after a short struggle and accepted the religion of its conquerors. So had Syria and Persia. The old Scythian beliefs and institutions in the countries round Balkh and Bokhara were also easily supplanted by Islam and some time after when it made its appearance in Afghanistan and the Kabul Valley, the decaying Buddhism also easily gave way and the entire population became converts to the religion of Muhammad.

The first Arab expedition was sent to the West coast of India somewhere near Broach in A.D. 637, but it came to nothing. The next attempt was made in 644 by the land route through Mekran into Sind, but this, too, proved abortive.

The reports which the soldiers took home about the country (Sind) were rather disheartening and damped the spirits of the Arabs. "Water" they said "is scarce, the fruits are poor, and the robbers are bold; if few troops are sent there they will be slain; if many, they will starve." No subsequent attempt was, therefore, made on an organised scale until provocation came from the people of Sind in A.D. 711.

Invasion and conquest of Sind, A.D. 711

Some ships conveying Muhammadan pilgrims from Ceylon with many valuable presents from the king of Ceylon to the Khalifa Walid were compelled by adverse winds to go to Debal where these were detained by the pirates infesting that port. Al-Hajaj, the Governor of Basra, demanded restitution from Dahir, the Raja of Sind, but the latter refused it on the ground that the port was not included in his territory and that he was unable to suppress the pirates. Al-Hajaj then persuaded the Khalifa Walid to declare war against Sind.

The expeditionary force comprising 6,000 Syrian soldiers, a camel corps of about equal strength and a number of catapults, under Muhammad Bin Kasim, reached Debal in the autumn A.D. 711 and captured the town after a short siege. From Debal the victorious army proceeded to Nerun where the Buddhist population of the town refused to co-operate with their ruler in the defence of the place and thus facilitated the task of the

invaders. Nerun fell early in A.D. 712. Kasim then attempted to cross the river Indus and was, again lucky in getting timely help from a treacherous subordinate official of Dahir called Moka Bassaya by the Arab historians. He supplied the invader with a number of boats with which the Arabs threw a bridge across the river and landed their army on the opposite bank. Dahir met the enemy at Rawar where a fierce battle was fought between the Arabs and the Hindus. A naphtha arrow struck the howdah of Dahir's elephant and set it on fire. Dahir jumped out on the ground, contrived to mount a horse, and charged the Arabs with great ferocity inflicting heavy losses on them until he was struck by an arrow and killed by an Arab soldier. His brave widow, with her bodyguard of valiant soldiers, also perished during a sally against the Muhammadan besiegers of the town of Bahmanabad where the remnant of Dahir's army had rallied. Kasim then advanced to Multan which was weakly defended and the capture of a few other cities completed the conquest of Sind. (A.D. 713).

Kasim is said to have been engaged on plans for the invasion of the north and north-west when his career came to a sudden and tragic end. The Arab soldiers remained

Failure of Arab occupation of Sind in Sind where they married Indian wives and settled down in permanent occupancy. Since the province was unremunerative, the Khalifa of Baghdad soon ceased taking interest in the affairs of Sind beyond nominating a governor

to succeed the retiring governor of the province. In A.D. 836 even this nominal connection between Baghdad and Sind, probably, ceased to exist when Musa without reference to the Khalifa, nominated his own son, Amran, to succeed him in the government of the province. The later history of the Arabs in Sind is rather obscure. However, we are able to gather from the account of the Arab historians that some of the governors of Sind made raids on Ujjain (Malwa) on one side and Vallabhi (Gujarat-Kathiawar) on the other. But the successes of the Arabs were very limited since the Rajput rulers of the land were able to defend themselves.

The conquest and occupation of Sind by the Arabs had proved a failure. This was partly due to the inadequate forces sent by the Khalifa for so formidable a project as the

Probable causes of failure conquest of India and to the still less adequate reinforcements for the maintenance of that conquest when it was effected. Even those

Arab chiefs and soldiers who had conquered and occupied the province did not get along well with one another. They belonged to various Arab clans and tribes and the diversity of clanish interests and feelings prevented their acting together against the Hindus for long. We cannot,

at the same time, ignore the fact that the Rajput chiefs, especially those in the north and east, had made themselves sufficiently strong to repel the invasion, or at least to check the progress of the Arabs. The renowned Bapa Rawal of Chitor had repulsed them with great loss when the Arabs raided that kingdom. The other reason for the failure of the Arabs was that they had entered the country from the wrong quarter. The province of Sind is unproductive in itself and is also cut off from the fertile plains of India by an extensive sandy desert which it was not easy for the Arabs to cross. The Arab sailors and merchants, however, penetrated much further than the Muslim armies. They were familiar with all the coast-line down to Ceylon and in many of the sea-ports and inland cities they were held in high repute, being allowed to build their mosques and worship in their own way without molestation by the Hindu chiefs.

Muhammad Bin Kasim's period of rule was not long enough to enable him to create anything in the shape of an administrative system in Sind. Again, these few years were also years of continuous fighting. Nevertheless whatever little he did in this direction gives evidence of the fact that his administrative policy was based on principles of toleration and conciliation. The Hindus were taken into civil and military services and subject to the payment of Jizya and other taxes they were also given permission to worship their gods in their own way. For the administration of criminal justice, Qazis were appointed who delivered their judgments in accordance with the laws of the Shariat but in civil disputes the Hindus obtained the decisions from their own *panchayats*.

From a political point of view, the Arab conquest of Sind, was a comparatively insignificant event in the history of Islam. But the effects of this conquest upon Muslim culture were profound and far-reaching. The Arabs, for the first time, came into direct contact with the Hindus and they found that the latter far excelled them in some of the cultural arts. The skill of the Indian musician, the cunning of the Indian painter and the wisdom of the Indian philosopher inspired, in the mind of the Arab warrior, genuine respect for the Indo-Aryan civilization. It must be said to the credit of the Arabs that they did not despise a noble culture because it belonged to the people of a different faith. Brahmin officials were employed in large numbers for various administrative duties, and so were the Hindu craftsmen engaged in designing and building cities, palaces and mosques. It was, in fact, in Sind that the Arabs had their first practical lessons in Indo-Aryan statecraft under the guidance of their Brahmin officials. To India, again, the

Arab Administration

The cultural effect of the Arab conquest

Arabs owe their knowledge of astronomy, medicine and other sciences. Some of the standard Sanskrit works on Astronomy (Brahma Siddhanta) and Medicine (Charaka) were translated into Arabic by Arab scholars with the assistance of Indian scholars during the reign of Khalifa Al-Mansur (A.D. 754-75). The Khalifas themselves had a liberal outlook in these matters and we are told by Tabari that Khalifa Harun-al-Rashid was completely cured by a Hindu physician of a disease from which he was suffering. The Arabs brought with them the new religion of Islam which they introduced among the people of the Indus Valley. This had a far more lasting effect than their political conquest; for Sind, today is a predominantly Muslim area in India.

SECTION II. THE GHAZNIVIDE OCCUPATION OF THE PANJAB

The Arab invasion had come and gone, and the memory of the early Muhammadan invaders gradually dwindled. The Rajput chiefs unhindered by any foreign aggression, continued building up their respective powers. Towards the close of the tenth century, however, the peace of the country was again broken, when, the Turks began to knock at the gates of India from the north-west. These invasions, in the end, so completely destroyed the isolation of India from the rest of Asia that from this time onward, for more than seven hundred years, a constant wave of invasions continued to flow into the country till it was finally checked, stemmed and rolled back by the Sikhs of the Panjab at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

About the time that they conquered Sind, the Arabs had also carried their conquests across the river Oxus. They subdued Samarkand, Bokhara, Khwarzim and Farghana and brought the Turks within the pale of Islam. But the conversion of these people, as their subsequent history shows, proved rather injurious to the interests of the Khilafat. Turki slaves were given military commands and other offices of trust in different parts of the Muslim empire or in the feudatory states of that empire. In the tenth century when the power of the Khalifas declined and several governors had made themselves independent in Iraq, Persia and Turkistan, the Turki officers of the empire, too, made a bid for independent political power.

Of these, one was Alaptigin who rose from the position of a slave to that of the governor of Khorasan under the Samanid kings of Persia, and then proclaimed himself as the independent ruler of a small mountain principality named Ghazni. He ruled over this principality for eight years and died in A.D. 963. Then followed a period of fourteen years of confusion during which the throne of Ghazni was occupied successively by Ishaq, Balakatigin and Pirai. In

*India and the
Turkish slaves*

*The rise of
the Turks*

*House of
Ghazni*

April 977, however, Sabuktigin, a promising slave upon whom Alaptigin had bestowed the hand of his daughter, seized the throne and founded the Yamini dynasty of Ghazni which endured for more than two centuries.

Sabuktigin's first care was to consolidate his newly acquired kingdom and to suppress its foes. He was active and vigorous, and his quick movements enabled him to triumph over his enemies. When he felt himself secure at home, he turned his attention to India. The Panjab was then held by Jaipal whose dominions extended as far as the limits of Kabul. Jaipal naturally became alarmed at the growing power of Sabuktigin and the two neighbouring rulers soon came into conflict. In the course of four campaigns, Jaipal lost all his territory west of the Indus, and the strong outpost of Peshawar was occupied by the Muslims about 988. Sabuktigin died in 997 after a prosperous reign of twenty years. His son Mahmud then succeeded him after a brief contest with his brother Ismail.

Born on November 1, A.D. 971, Mahmud was twenty seven years of age at the time of his accession, full of health and vigour and in the prime of youth. He had gained much military experience and had also held independent administrative charge of the province of Khorasan during the last five years of his father's life. He was thus fully qualified to govern the growing kingdom of Ghazni.

*Sultan
Mahmud
A.D. 998-1030*

Within a couple of years of his accession, Mahmud obtained formal recognition of his sovereignty over Ghazni, Afghanistan and Khorasan from the Khalifa of Baghdad and added to his name the titles of *Yamin-ud-Daulah* and *Amin-ul-Millat*. On this occasion, he is said to have resolved that he would undertake every year an expedition to Hind. If he did not carry out the letter of his resolution, he fell little short of it. Between the years 1000 and 1026, he made at least seventeen campaigns in India in which he ranged across the plains from the Indus to the Ganges. His first attack was directed against his father's old enemy, the Raja Jaipal.

Having settled the affairs of his kingdom, Mahmud turned his attention towards Hindustan and directed his first attack upon Jaipal who had endeavoured to regain Peshawar. In the course of the battle in November 1001, Jaipal and fifteen of his relations were taken prisoners, immense booty passed into the hands of the victor;¹ and on payment of further ransom from his son Anangpal, Jaipal

*Renewal of
Struggle with
the Rulers
of Lahore*

¹ Utbi, the court historian of Mahmud writes:

"The necklace which was taken from the neck of Jaipal, was made up of large pearls and shining gems and rubies set in gold, of which the value was 200,000 *dinars*; and twice that value was obtained from the necks of those relations who were taken prisoners or slain."

appeal. Prominent amongst those who joined him in person or sent troops to his assistance were the rulers of Kalanjar, Kanauj, Delhi and Ajmer. The Hindu army under the leadership of Anangpal advanced against the Turki invader and encamped at Ohind (1008). In the earlier stages of the battle that ensued, it is said, that a force of 30,000 khokhars, bare-headed and bare-footed and armed with spears and other weapons delivered such a tremendous attack that the ranks of the Turki army were utterly broken and Mahmud contemplated retreat. But towards the close of the day a mishap in the Indian army turned the scales in Mahmud's favour. The elephant upon which Anangpal rode 'took fright and bore his rider from the field.' The Hindu army, unfortunately, took it as a signal for flight on the part of their general, and gave way and fled. The Turks took advantage of this confusion among the enemy ranks and completely overpowered them during the retreat. The battle of Ohind proved a decisive battle. The whole country seemed to be paralysed after the defeat of Anangpal and the army of Mahmud 'scored through the kingdoms of Hindustan like a comb through a poll of hair.'

*Battle of
Ohind
A.D. 1003*

The Sultan next proceeded to take the fort of Nagarkot (Kangra), in which had been deposited 'a greater quantity of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls, than had ever been collected in the treasury of any prince upon earth.' This vast treasure¹ was carried to Ghazni and Mahmud left his own garrison in the fortress which was recovered by the Hindus after thirty-five years. In the year 1014, Mahmud directed his armies to the capture of Thaneswar and on his return, marched again to Multan to chastize its refractory governor.

*Expeditions
against Nagar-
kot and
Thaneswar*

The years A.D. 1015 to 1018 passed without any further invasion of India, but in the latter year, Sultan Mahmud again set out with a large army of 10,000 horse and 20,000 foot, crossed the Indus and rapidly marched on to Kanauj. The greatness and beauty of the city struck the grim invader. 'There are a thousand edifices,' he wrote, 'as firm as the faith of the faithful, most of them of marble, besides innumerable temples; nor is it likely this city has attained its present condition but at the expense of many millions of *dinars*, nor could such another be constructed under a period of two centuries.' Rajyapala, who then ruled Kanauj, was taken unawares and submitted to the

*Conquest of
Kanauj
A.D. 1017*

¹ According to estimates of Utbi, the plunder of Nagarkot contained coins worth 70,000 *dinars* and the gold and silver ingots amounting to 7,000,000 maunds in weight, 'besides many thousand pieces of wearing apparel. Among the booty was also a 'silver house measuring thirty yards by fifteen yards which could be taken to pieces and put together again.'

conqueror and saved his city from destruction by surrendering large quantity of jewels and about one hundred elephants. On his return Mahmud halted at Mathura, pillaged the town, melted the gold and silver images, and carried off an immense booty.

The cowardly submission of Rajyapala of Kanauj angered his fellow Rajput chiefs who, under the command of the Chandel

Mahmud's march on Kalanjar and his final capture of Lahore, A.D. 1021 king of Kalanjar, combined against him, slew him, and dispossessed his family of the throne, Mahmud, who regarded the ruler of Kanauj as his vassal, came down to India to punish the Chandel prince. Ganda, the Chandel, fled and Mahmud was baulked of his prey. Returning home, the Sultan took possession of Lahore, ousted Trilochanapala, the son of Anangpal, and left a Muhammadan governor in the place. Thus Lahore passed under Muhammadan rule in A.D. 1021.

The last expedition of Mahmud was directed against the famous shrine of Somnath which lay at the furthest extremity

Expedition against Somnath, 1025 of the Kutch Peninsula. In October 1025, Mahmud set out from Ghazni with a large force. Having reached Multan, the Sultan decided to march across the great desert of India. He was

aware of the arduous nature of the undertaking, and accordingly made necessary preparations for it. He ordered each of his troopers to carry with him food, fodder, and water for several days, and, in addition to these individual efforts there was provided a train of 30,000 camels carrying water and supplies for the desert march. These timely precautions enabled the Ghaznvide army to cross the desert without any serious mishap. Mahmud reached Anhilwara in December. The Chalukya Raja Bhimdeva left his capital, and retired into the mountains and Mahmud pushed on to Somnath. After a fierce fight of two days, the Muhammadans captured the fortified town and sacked the temple. The great *Lingam* was cast down and broken into pieces which, it is said, were sent to Ghazni, Mecca and Medina, as witnesses of Mahmud's zeal for the faith. The sandalwood gates of the temple were also carried off to Ghazni and a million pounds worth of gold and jewels found their way into Mahmud's treasury.

The Somnath expedition was practically the last of the most noteworthy achievement¹ of Sultan Mahmud in India. He died five years later in April 1030.

¹In 1027, the Sultan came as far as the Indus to punish the Jats who had harassed his army on its return home from Somnath. The Jats were good fighters on water and had a huge fleet of 4,000 boats besides a number of trained war elephants. Mahmud ordered the construction of 1,400 boats and provided them with long iron spikes to keep off the war elephants of the Jats and eventually succeeded in inflicting a crushing defeat on them.

Mahmud ascended the throne of Ghazni at the age of 27 and breathed his last before he had completed the 60th year of his life. During these thirty three years he knew no rest. His foot was always in the stirrup, and his military exploits extended over a vast region: from Iraq to the Ganges Doab and from Khwarz-
Estimate of Mahmud's achievements
 zim to Gujarat-Kathiawar. During these campaigns, Mahmud seldom met with a serious reverse even though he had to fight against some of the best soldiers of the age like the Tartars of Central Asia and the Rajputs of India. He was, indeed, a leader of consummate skill and high calibre. At his death, Mahmud was the greatest sovereign in the Islamic world. Had he possessed political conception of a higher order, he had ample opportunities of transforming the small State of Ghazni into a mighty empire as his conquests were wide and extensive. But he had no aptitude for civil administration. "Outward order and security" as Lane-Poole observes, "was all he attempted to attain in his unwieldy empire; to organise and consolidate was not in his scheme."

So far as India is concerned it is only in a limited sense that Mahmud can be described as an Indian sovereign, for, it was only the province of the Panjab that he actually annexed to the vast dominions under his rule. And this, too, he did only in the later years of his reign. In Northern, Central and Western India, Mahmud was the first Muslim king to carry the banner of Islam and 'to tread the path in which so many followed him!' He was, in a way, a pioneer who opened the way for the conquest of the country by later generations of his co-religionists. ||

It is not correct to call Mahmud's wars in India as religious wars. In his Indian expeditions, he was actuated more by lust of gold than his zeal for Islam. None of the contemporary Muslim historians credit him with the conversion of Hindus. Nor is he said to have put a Hindu to death except in a battle. The images he broke and the temples he destroyed were all destroyed during the campaigns, but in time of peace, Mahmud 'never demolished a single temple.' On the other hand, the Hindus living in Ghazni enjoyed full religious freedom. They were freely employed in the civil and military administration under Mahmud and his successors. Some of the Hindu military officers like Tilak and Haj Rai were regarded as able and trustworthy officers of the State. "If he harassed the Hindu Rajas," observes Dr. Nazim, "he did not spare the Muslim sovereigns of Iran and Transoxiana. The drama of plunder and bloodshed that was enacted in the sacred Ganges Doab was repeated with no less virulence on the slopes of the Mount Damavand and the banks of the river Oxus." Religious considerations never seriously influenced Mahmud's schemes of conquest.
Religious policy

It is said that Mahmud had a well-built body though his face was not handsome, having been disfigured with small-pox. He was full of energy, enterprise and determination, as is evidenced from the facts of his career. *His character* We cannot say whether the stories told of his avarice are true and authentic. He had no doubt, a complex character. In his Indian conquests, Mahmud was guilty of barbarous acts. He destroyed Hindu temples and edifices and by doing so deprived the country of some of its most beautiful works of ancient art. On the other hand, we find that he summoned to Ghazni great architects, artists, scholars and poets from all parts of his dominions to embellish his capital. At Ghazni, he built a college, a library, and a museum and adorned it with trophies of war and works of art collected from various countries which he had conquered.

Amongst the literary men of Mahmud's court, Albiruni naturally interests a student of the history of India more than any one else. He stayed in this country for a long time and made a careful study of the manners and customs of the people and has left behind a vivid account of them. *Al-Biruni and his account of India*

Albiruni, or Abu Rihan Mohammad, was a native of Khiva and entered the service of Mahmud in 1017 when he was about forty-five years of age. It was at this mature age that Albiruni began the study of Sanskrit with a view to read in original the literature of the Hindus, and acquire an intimate knowledge of their social, religious and political institutions. He wrote many works during the thirty years in which he was engaged on his scientific and literary research. His *Tahkik-ul-Hind* has been translated into several European languages, and forms an important source of information regarding the eleventh century India. In connection with the social conditions of the country, Albiruni mentions that *Sati* was in vogue, widows were not permitted to marry again and that the custom of child marriage prevailed in Hindu society.¹ Speaking of the religious beliefs of the people, he observes that the literate and the cultured classes in society believed that God was "one," although an average man had polytheistic views about God, and made and worshipped images of Him. Albiruni speaks very highly of the Hindu schools of Philosophy as also of their technical and scientific accomplishments.

Referring to the decaying political conditions of the country, Albiruni speaks of about half a dozen independent kingdoms existing in Northern India alone: Kashmir, Sind, Gujarat, Malwa, Kanauj and Bengal. The administration of justice was liberal

¹ This custom appears to have been in vogue since several centuries, Cf. Rajyasri, sister of emperor Harsha was married when she was hardly twelve years of age.

and humane, and the code of punishment for criminal offences was mild. Capital punishment was rare, mutilation of limbs being regarded as an appropriate penalty for certain serious offences. Brahmins were exempt from capital punishment just as they were exempt from state taxes.

After the death of Mahmud, his second son Masud, seized the throne, and managed to keep the empire intact for about eleven years. But the dominions of Mahmud were lacking in cohesion and solidarity, and it became impossible for his weak successors to keep them together. The Seljuk Turks, under Tughril Beg, pressed hard on the western provinces of the empire, seized Nishapur (A.D. 1037) and brought the whole of Khorasan under their sway. Having established themselves in Khorasan they continued their encroachments on the Ghazni territory till Sultan Ala-ud-Din Masud almost gave himself up into the hands of the Seljuk ruler Malik Sanjar. Sanjar, whose sister was married to the Sultan acquired so much influence at the court of Ghazni that he came to be styled as the King-maker. Sultan Bahram who ruled in Ghazni (A.D. 1117-1152) owed his elevation to the throne entirely to Malik Sanjar. The Ghaznavide Sultans thus lost their power and prestige and under the successors of Bahram the condition of the empire grew worse indeed.

Collapse of the empire

Sultan Masud though fully occupied at home did not, altogether neglect the affairs of his government in the Panjab. Ariyarak who held the charge of the province since the days of Mahmud began to behave like an autocrat. He was summoned to Ghazni on a pretext and was there inveigled and cast into prison.

Affairs in India. Hindu reaction

The Sultan now appointed his father's treasurer, Ahmad Niyaltgin to the post of the Panjab governor. The new governor set himself to the task of improving the administration and thus came into clash with the chief Qazi who claimed almost exclusive authority in matters judicial and religious. Niyaltgin's expedition to Benares (A.D. 1034) and the immense booty he seized from the place gave an excuse to the Qazi and his other rivals to poison the ears of the Sultan against him. Orders for his recall were accordingly issued and a Hindu named Tilak who was officer commanding the Hindu troops in Ghazni was appointed to succeed Niyaltgin. Tilak is described as a man of humble origin, but handsome, enterprising and an accomplished scholar of Persian and Hindi. Within two years of his period of rule, Tilak restored order in the province and extended the authority of the Sultan as far as Hansi.

But the forces of disorder again reared their head when the Seljuk Turks threatened the nerve centre of the empire at Ghazni and a series of weak governors succeeded each other in the Panjab in quick succession. A confederacy of Hindu Rajas was orga-

nised under the leadership of the ruler of Thaneswar and after a short campaigning the Hindus did succeed in recovering the forts of Hansi, Thaneswar and Nagarkot (Kangra). The Ghaznavide officers were driven across the Ravi and the Hindu Sovereignty was restored in the whole of the eastern Panjab. But the Hindu Rajas learnt no lessons from their adversity, and after a century and a half when Muhammad Ghori invaded India he found then as disunited as ever.

Mahmud of Ghazni had no desire to be an Indian monarch, and contented himself with exercising suzerainty over the greater part of the Panjab, including Lahore.

Muhammad Ghori,
1175—1206

The next stage in the conquest of India began in the third quarter of the twelfth century when Muhammad Ghori opened his series of invasions in A.D. 1175. The Panjab had already accepted the Muhammadan rule and it was now the turn of the rest of Northern India to feel the hand of the Muslim conquerors from the north-west.

SECTION III. MUHAMMAD GHORI AND THE CONQUEST OF HINDUSTAN.

Shahab-ud-Din Muhammad Ghori was the first Muslim who laid the foundations of permanent Muhammadan rule in India.

The Kings of Ghor and their struggle with the Sultans of Ghazni

He was the grandson of Izuddin Hussain, the chief of Ghor which was a small principality in the south-west of Herat. Like the other feudal vassals of the empire, Izuddin used to pay tribute to his liege-lord, the ruler of Ghazni. In the reign of Bahram Shah, however, the relations between the Ghor chiefs and their masters became seriously strained and Qutbuddin, the son and successor of Izuddin was made a prisoner and put to death by the order of Bahram Shah. Kutb's brother, Saif-ud-Din, immediately took up arms to take revenge and marched on Ghazni in A.D. 1150. Bahram fled to Kirman, leaving the city in possession of Saif-ud-Din. Soon after, having collected an army, Bahram advanced to Ghazni, recaptured the city and put Saif-ud-Din to death with horrible tortures. The third brother Ala-ud-Din Ghori, on hearing of the murder, vowed a bitter revenge on Bahram and his people. He marched on Ghazni, defeated Bahram and in a fit of rage gave up the city to indiscriminate pillage and slaughter for seven days. Most of the noble edifices raised by the Ghaznavide kings, were destroyed and even learned and inoffensive men were put to death in cold blood.¹ But Ala-ud-Din was not destined to enjoy a quiet reign. He was defeated

¹It is for this act of brutality that Ala-ud-Din has been given the appropriate epithet of *Jahansoz*.

by the Seljuks and made a prisoner. The throne of Ghor then passed into the hands of his nephew Ghiyas-ud-Din who reconquered Ghazni in 1173 and made over its government to his younger brother Shahab-ud-Din. The house of Ghor thus succeeded the house of Mahmud Ghazni in their vast possessions.

Feeling secure in his possession of Ghazni, Ghiyas-ud-Din despatched his brother Shahab-ud-Din to India to seize the provinces which belonged to the fallen dynasty of Mahmud and to which the last member of that house had now retired. Accordingly, he marched from Ghazni with a strong army and taking a southerly route reached Multan. The city of Multan which was in the possession of the heretical sect of the Karmathians, was compelled to submit in 1175. This successful attack on Multan was followed up by the occupation of the important fort of Uchh which, according to Firishta, was betrayed into the hands of Shahab-ud-Din by the wife of its Hindu governor. Shahab-ud-Din left strong garrisons at Multan and Uchh and returned to Ghazni. Three years later he again appeared in India and advanced through Multan, Uchh and the waterless Indian desert against the Rajput ruler of Anhilwara (Gujarat). But the young Baghela ruler, Bhimadeva, was too strong for the invader. Shahab-ud-Din was beaten back with heavy loss in 1178 and retired through the inhospitable desert to Ghazni with only a remnant of his army.

Early Indian campaigns of Shahab-ud-Din Ghor: Multan Sind and Gujarat

Next year the Ghor invader again left Ghazni in the hope of better luck and accordingly chose a new route. In A.D. 1180 he appeared before the walls of Peshawar, took possession of the town, and then advanced to Lahore, the capital of Sultan Khusro Malik, a descendant of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni. The fort was successfully defended, but the degenerate Sultan, anxious to purchase peace, gave up his son as a hostage and got rid of the invader.

Defeat of Khusro Malik and capture of Lahore by Ghor Sultan 1185-6

Shahab-ud-Din Ghor then marched to Sialkot on the invitation of Chakra Deva, Raja of Jammu who wanted his help against the warlike Khokhar tribes occupying the country all along the lower hills of Kashmir. The result of this expedition was the establishment of a fortress at Sialkot garrisoned by Ghor's own men and supported by Chakra Deva. Khusro Malik had a long standing feud with the ruler of Jammu and was naturally apprehensive of his designs. He regarded the Sialkot garrison as a potential danger to his authority. As soon as, therefore, Ghor left India, Khusro picked up courage and besieged Sialkot but failed to take it. These acts of Khusro brought the Ghor invader again to the Panjab in 1186. He laid siege to the fort of Lahore and Khusro Malik being unable to defend it for long

came out of the fort and sued for peace. Ghorî took him and his family to Ghazni and confined them there in the fortress at Ferozkoh. Thus the house of Ghazni ceased to reign even in Lahore.

With the fall of Lahore, the whole of the Panjab passed into the hands of the victor and having already secured Sind, Shahab-ud-Din Ghorî was in possession of the basin of the Indus and in a position to make further advance into the fertile plains of India where he could prosecute a holy war against the idolatrous and prosperous Hindus.

Shahab-ud-Din had now no Muhammadan rival left. All India, that was then Muhammadan (Multan, Sind and Panjab), had passed into his hands. The Rajput princes

The chief Kingdoms of Northern India realized the danger that threatened them, but there were, as usual, dissensions among them. At this time, the greatest ruling houses in Northern India were—the Chauhans who ruled over

Ajmer and Delhi; the Gaharwars and Rathors who ruled over Kanauj and Benares and also extended their territory into Bihar; the Chandelas who had established their sway over modern Bundelkhand and had a number of important strongholds in their kingdom like Kalanjar, Kalpi, and Mahoba; the Senas who had taken possession of the greater part of Bengal; and the Baghelas who ruled over Gujarat.

In 1191 Shahab-ud-Din having organized a powerful army advanced into India and came as far as Bhatinda on the borders of the Chauhan kingdom of Delhi. The Hindu Rajas, realizing the common danger, formed a great confederacy against the invader, and as many as one hundred or more leading chiefs of Northern India sent their contingents to fight under the command of Prithviraja. But Jai Chandra of Kanauj and his associates held aloof. The armies met on the battlefield of Tarain. It was the first great clash of Muslims and Rajputs. The Muslim cavalry charged the Hindu centre and tried to press their advantage. But the Rajputs followed different tactics on this occasion. They outflanked the enemy and closed upon him on both sides while he was busy with his attack on their centre. The result was that the two wings of Ghorî's army gave way and he himself was surrounded by the Rajputs. In single combat with Prithviraja's brother, Shahab-ud-Din received such a serious wound from his opponent's lance that he was compelled to withdraw. It is said that he would have fallen from his horse through loss of blood, had not one of his faithful followers leapt up behind him and held him upon the saddle. As a consequence of that accident, Ghorî's army

First battle of Tarain and defeat of Muhammad Ghorî, A.D. 1191

was completely routed. The Hindus did not follow up their success and after a pursuit of about forty miles the enemy was allowed to retire to Lahore, where he collected the wreck of his army and returned to Ghor and subsequently to Ghazni.

But Shahab-ud-Din was not the man to be discouraged by one defeat. He had set his heart on the conquest of India and no sooner was he able to recruit a powerful army than he marched out to wipe off the disgrace of the defeat he had suffered. In the year 1192, accordingly, he collected an army of 120,000 Turki and Afghan horsemen and marched suddenly into India by way of Peshawar. The field of battle was the same, but the issue was far different. At the end of a well-fought day the charge of the Sultan's bodyguard of 10,000 mounted archers broke the Rajput ranks. 'Like a great building,' writes Firishta, 'this prodigious (Hindu) army once shaken, tottered to its fall, and was lost in its own ruins.' The power of the Rajputs was hopelessly crushed. Prithviraja was captured and put to death. His brother, the Viceroy of Delhi, fell in the battle. The Rajput principalities of Ajmer and Delhi were then occupied by the victors. 'In fact, the second battle of Tarain in 1192,' remarks Vincent Smith, 'may be regarded as the decisive contest which assured the ultimate success of the Muhammadan attack on Hindustan.'

*Second battle of
Tarain and the
defeat of
Prithviraj, 1192*

After the victory of Tarain, Ghorî returned to Khorasan, leaving his former slave Kutb-ud-Din Aibak, as his representative in India. Kutb-ud-Din fully justified his master's selection. He followed up Ghorî's successes with vigour, reduced Delhi which had held out for some time after the battle of Tarain, and in January 1193 established the seat of Muhammadan government in the city.¹

*Kutb-ud-Din
Aibak in Delhi*

Next year, 1194, Shahab-ud-Din returned to India and attacked Kanauj. Jai Chandra soon tasted the bitter fruit of disunion. His capital, Kanauj, was stormed and the king himself was slain, as he fell back in the direction of Benares. The city of Benares, too, was laid under contribution and its rich treasure 'of gold and silver was packed and carried off to Ghazni loaded on 1,400 camels.' The victory over Jai Chandra destroyed the second great Rajput house in Northern India, extended the Muslim dominions into Bihar, and opened the way, which was soon followed up, into the rich land of Bengal. An event of great consequence followed these victories. The proud Rajputs who disdained to live under the rule of their conquerors retreated from Kanauj to the sandy

*Muhammad
Ghorî's
invasion of
Kanauj 1194*

¹The regular capital of Muslim India during Aibak's reign was Lahore. Delhi became capital under Iltutmish.

deserts of Marwar where they founded small principalities and lived an independent life in their new home which subsequently came to be known after them as Rajputana.

After the fall of Kanauj, Muhammad Ghorî returned to Ghazni leaving the conduct of affairs to Kutb-ud-Din whom he now created his viceroy in India. For the time being, Kutb-ud-Din was engaged in putting down rebellion in different places, more especially in Ajmer, where some surviving members of the late

*Aibak in India:
Ajmer,
Anhilwara
and Bundel-
khand*

Chauhan nobility were dissatisfied with the rule of the illegitimate son and successor of Prithviraja who had been nominated by Aibak. Having defeated and slain in battle, Hem Raj, the chief of the revolutionary party, Aibak appointed a Muhammadan governor to protect and control the Raja. He, then, proceeded to Gujarat and on his way reduced to submission the hill chiefs of Abu. Reaching Anhilwara, Kutb-ud-Din occupied the capital, defeated Bhimadeva and thus avenged the defeat which his master Shahab-ud-Din had suffered twenty years ago at the hands of the ruler of Gujarat (A.D. 1196).

In the year 1202, Kutb-ud-Din captured Kalanjar and Kalpi, two important forts in Bundelkhand. The strong fortress of Kalanjar was surrendered by the minister of the Chandel ruler Raja Parma Dev to Kutub-ud-Din and the town was plundered and its temples, beautiful works of Chandel architecture, were mercilessly destroyed and disfigured or converted into mosques. After capturing Kalanjar, Aibak reduced Mahoba, the capital of the Chandela kingdom.

The people of Bihar and Bengal were no warriors, From the time of Asoka, the province of Bihar, as its name signifies, was the land of Viharas or monasteries where thousands of Buddhist monks used to reside. These monks were always engaged either in worshipping the relics of Buddha or passed their time in religious discussions. Such men could not have been expected to offer any resistance to the Muslim invader whose logic was far different from theirs. They were seized with terror and submitted to the invaders without even a show of struggle.

There is thus a striking contrast between the conquest of Bihar and Bengal and that of the Rajput princes of Delhi and Kanauj. One of Kutb-ud-Din's captains, Ikhtiyar-ud-Din Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar, a Khalji officer in the service of the governor of Oudh overran the region and effected its subjugation with the utmost ease. He acted quite independently of Kutb-ud-Din, and from Badayun began to make plundering raids into Bihar where he was gradually joined by other freebooters until he found himself in command of numerous horsemen. One day he moved out with a party of two hundred

horsemen and boldly attacked and captured the fort and the next day he was the master of the capital of the province. Raja Inderduman Pal sought safety in flight. The city was given to plunder and the monasteries of Nalanda and Vikramasila with their monks and their literary treasures were all destroyed. Benares and Bihar, the two important seats of Hindu learning, were perhaps the greatest sufferers in this respect. The indiscriminate destruction of the noble monuments of art and literature which was effected during the course of the early Muhammadan invasions is very unfortunate since the rich heritage of civilization is now for ever lost to the country.

Bengal succumbed even more easily than Bihar. Emboldened by his victory over Bihar, Ikhtiyar Khalji set out early in A.D. 1203 with a large body of horse to conquer Bengal. His personal movements were so quick that with only eighteen companions he suddenly appeared before the city gates of Nudiah, the capital of Bengal. To avoid suspicion, the party pretended that they were dealers in horses. They were allowed to enter the city; and at last reached the palace of the Raja and boldly attacked the door-keepers. The raider's audacity succeeded. The old Raja Lakshmanasena was eating his dinner and no sooner heard an outbreak in the courtyard than he slipped away by the back door leaving his palace and treasures in the hands of these adventurers. Meanwhile, Ikhtiyar's main force began to enter the city and took possession of the capital. Henceforth Bihar and Bengal also belonged to the Muhammadans.

*Conquest of
Bengal by
Ikhtiyar Khalji*

Now that his authority had been established in Bengal, the restless Ikhtiyar proceeded to invade Assam and the countries beyond. He collected an army of 10,000 and started on his adventures. He penetrated deep into these difficult regions of the east with the result that the men and horses were faced with death, disease and starvation and perished almost to a man. Of those who were fortunate to return the only one known to history was Ali bin Mardan Khalji who later on became governor of Bengal.

*Expedition to
Assam
A.D. 1205*

Believing that internal tranquillity had been restored in his new dominions in India, Shahab-ud-Din returned to Ghazni leaving the conduct of affairs in the hands of Kutb-ud-Din. At home he was so much occupied against Turks and other rebellious tribes that he had little leisure to spare for India. In 1203, the Ghori brothers suffered a terrible defeat at the battle of Andkhud which 'dealt a fatal blow to their military reputation in India.' Rumours even spread in this country that Shahab-ud-Din had been killed

*Revolt of the
Panjab and the
death of
Muhammad
Ghori A.D. 1208*

in action against the Turks. The warlike Khokhars and other tribes of the Salt Range, taking advantage of these rumours rose in revolt under their ambitious chief Rai Sal, laid waste nearly the whole of the province, cut off communications between Peshawar and Multan and even captured Lahore. The Sultan returned from Ghazni (October 1205) and in conjunction with Kutb-ud-Din who had been summoned from Delhi, suppressed the revolt and slew many of the Khokhars. It is said that twenty of them now swore vengeance. In March, 1206, as the Sultan was on the return march to Ghazni and had encamped on the bank of the river Jhelum near the village of Dhamiak, this party of twenty swam across the river during the night, overpowered the sentinels and stabbed the Sultan. His remains were carried to Ghazni and interred there.

Shahab-ud-Din left no male issue. His nephew Mahmud, son of Ghiyas-ud-Din succeeded him on the throne of Ghazni.

*Successors of
Shahab-ud-Din
Ghori*

But Mahmud, too, was king only in name. The real authority had passed into the hands of the provincial governors, namely Yalduz in Ghazni, Kubacha in Multan and Sind, Aibak in Delhi and Ikhtiyar Khalji in Bihar and Bengal.

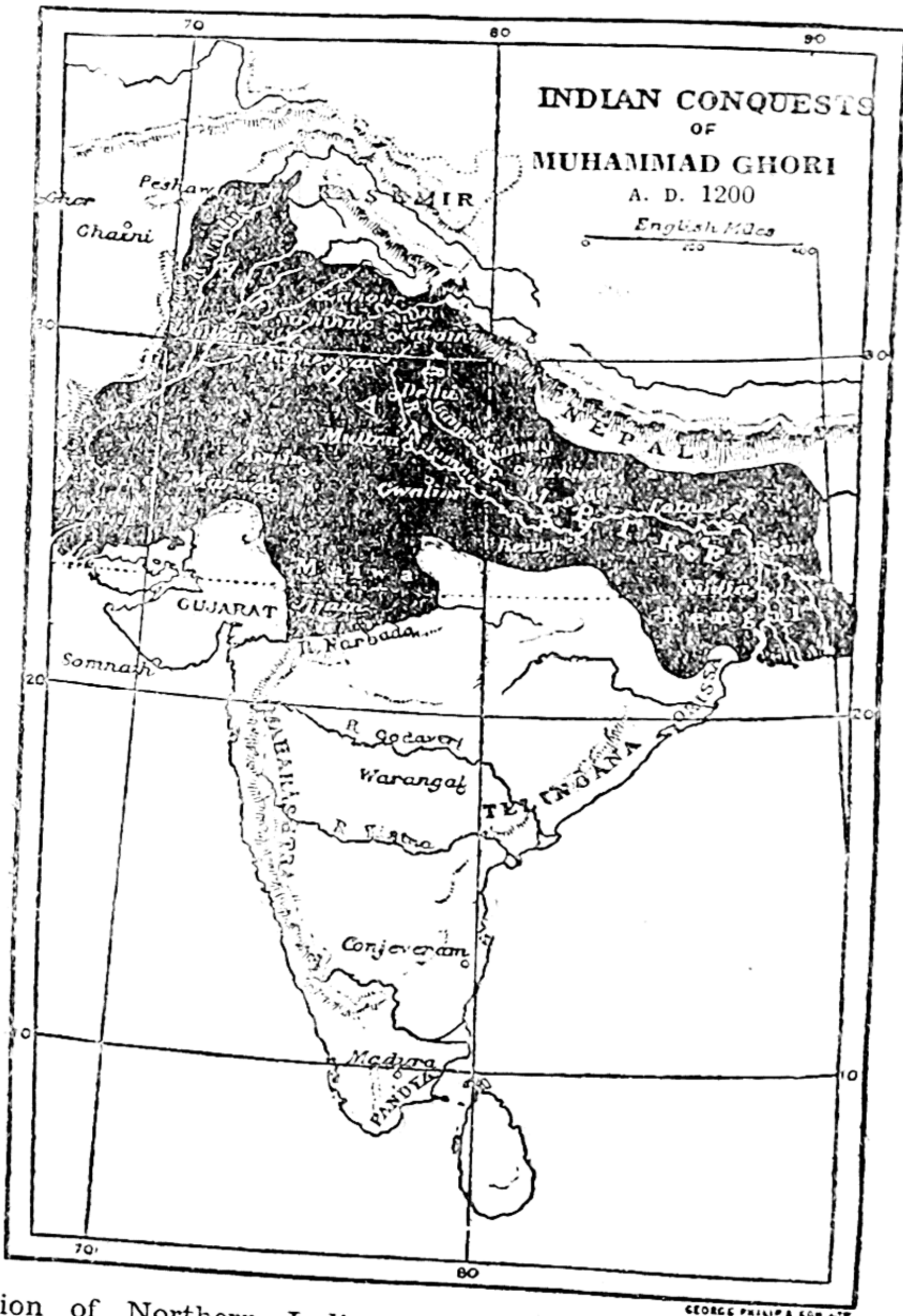
Shahab-ud-Din Ghori began his Indian career in A.D. 1175 and within thirty years he and his lieutenants conquered

*Estimate of
Muhammad
Ghori*

the major portion of Northern India from Indus to Delhi and Ajmer, Kanauj, Benares, Bihar, Bengal, Gwalior and Bundelkhand. Unlike Mahmud of Ghazni who came, fought, plundered and retired, the Ghori invader appears to have

had a definite scheme of conquest. It is true, he did not stay in India but the fact that he made arrangements for the occupation of the conquered territories leaves little doubt in our mind that the Ghori Sultan had aimed at permanent conquest of the country. After his first victory over the Rajputs at Tarain, as we know, Shahab-ud-Din left Kutb-ud-Din Aibak at Delhi to consolidate his possessions in India and to plan out further conquests in the country. In the second and third expeditions he captured Kanauj and Benares 'the political and religious capitals of Northern India.' His lieutenant, Ikhtiyar Khalji extended his conquests farther east while Kutb-ud-Din rounded off the new kingdom of Delhi by taking possession of the Chandela country of Bundelkhand. Thus, the foundations of a permanent Muslim Empire in India were laid by Shahab-ud-Din. His exploits, no doubt, do not look so brilliant and romantic as those of Mahmud of Ghazni but the results of his efforts proved more abiding. The treasures carried away by Mahmud were replenished, the temples destroyed or desecrated by him were rebuilt and repaired but the Hindu States conquered by Shahab-ud-Din disappeared for ever.

The rapidity with which Shahab-ud-Din Ghori recovered from his first disastrous defeat at Tarain (1191) and with which he subsequently effected his conquests of the major



portion of Northern India is significant and calls for some observations on the conduct and character of the Hindu and Muslim soldiers who were engaged in this struggle. In this connection,

Causes of the Muslim victory

Dr. Vincent Smith makes one apt observation. He says, "The Hindu defenders for their country, although fully equal to their assailants in courage and contempt of death, were distinctly inferior in the art of war, and for that reason lost their independence." Dr. Smith's observation, indeed, explains the chief reason of the failure of the Hindus in defending their country. But their lack of knowledge of suitable strategy or tactics of war were not the only causes of their failure. Their political and social systems too, had a share in bringing this national catastrophe upon the Hindus.

The Muslim army had the advantage of fighting under one undivided command, whereas the Hindu army lacked unity of command and direction. The Hindu host was comprised of contingents supplied by various independent or semi-independent princes who cared more for their own safety and disregarded all rules of military discipline. As compared to the central Asian cavalry, the cavalry of India was weaker and lighter. The indigenous breed of horses of India was poor in size as well as in temper. They could not stand the shock of battle. To make up for their light mounts, the Indian prince used to train elephants for use in war. But this heavy animal proved no match for the mobile cavalry of the enemy whether the enemy was the Macedonian Greek or the Central Asian Turk. Again, the Muslims had a wide and excellent recruiting ground in the countries beyond the Hindukush and the Suleman ranges from where they used to bring fresh levies to fight in India. Attracted by the prospects of loot, large numbers of men from these regions followed the flag of invaders like Mahmud of Ghazni and Shahab-ud-Din Ghorî. A Hindu prince, on the other hand, was compelled to recruit his forces from a very restricted area since the country was split up into small independent kingdoms which were often at war one against the other.

Even these limited resources of a Hindu Raja were, unfortunately, further affected by the operations of the caste system. The defence of the country was assigned to the military class alone, which at this time was represented by the Rajputs. This class alone bore the brunt of these invasions and the rest of the population remained unconcerned. On no single occasion, during these years, do we find that the general mass of the people were stirred to defend themselves or realised fully the dangers to which their country was exposed by these invasions. In fact, the mass of the population was unacquainted with the art of war and had no interest in it. The result of this was that the ruling chiefs, even if they wished to do so, could not get men who had an aptitude for military service.

Another reason for this passive attitude of the people was the fact that an average man lived under an autonomous village government with which the central government seldom or never

interfered. So long, therefore, as the peasant was allowed to till his land in peace he did not care who ruled the country. He would only know of the change of ruler at Delhi when he was called upon to pay his revenues.

Besides these, there were other factors, too, which contributed to the failure of the Hindus to defend themselves. For centuries they had been cut off from the rest of the world and lived a self-contained life. For three centuries or more after the death of Harsha, India was not visited by any foreign invader and her people were allowed to live a peaceful life. They were consequently deprived of any incentive to develop their military strength or patriotism and at the time of the Muhammadan invasions, as we have seen, the country did not rise as one nation to defend itself against its invaders. On the contrary, Jai Chandra watched with unconcern the fate of Prithviraja and the powerful Chandel princes did not move a finger when Ghori was molesting the ruler of Kanauj on the other side of the Jumna. As compared to this, the Muslim invaders were very much better organised and were always ready to die for their faith. Even such great military leaders as Mahmud of Ghazni and Amir Timur used to appeal to the religious sentiments of their followers when they set out upon their Indian invasions. Thus, the religious homogeneity of the Muslims on the one hand, and the absence of the sentiment of nationality among the Hindus on the other, explains, in a great measure why the former ultimately scored victory over the latter.

NOTES

(A) (i) The conquest of Sind and Multan by the Arabs was made by Muhd. Bin Kasim, nephew of Al-Hajaj, the Arab Governor of Basra in A.D. 711-713. The Arabs had to fight contested battles with the forces of Raja Dahir at Debal, Rawar, and Bahmanabad. In their war materials, the Arabs had also brought with them a number of catapults which served the purpose of artillery and with the use of which the Indians were not familiar. (ii) The Arab conquest was confined to Sind and Multan; but even in this region they did not retain political power for long. (For reasons see text under Probable Causes of Failure). (iii) More important than the political conquest of Sind was, perhaps, the fact that the Semitic culture of the Arabs and the Aryan culture of the Hindus came in contact for the first time. (For results of this contact—see text.)

(B) (i) The conquest of the Panjab was made by the Turks of Ghazni, Sabuktigin and his son Mahmud (A.D. 998-1030). The Panjab during these years was ruled by the Sahi dynasty of the Hindus, and the political boundaries of the Panjab in the west extended as far as Kabul. Sabuktigin deprived Jaipal of his trans-Indus territory and his son Mahmud gradually grabbed the rest of the kingdom and appointed Muslim governors on his behalf. Among the other important invasions of Mahmud may be mentioned those directed against the imperial city

of Kanauj, the holy city of Mathura, the hilly regions of Kangra and Jwala Mukhi, and Somnath. (ii) In all these he was successful and from all these places he carried untold wealth; but at none of these places he stationed a garrison. (iii) Although the treasures which Mahmud had carried away were replenished and the temples he had destroyed or desecrated were rebuilt and repaired, his expeditions were not altogether barren of more permanent results. His work may be taken as that of a pioneer. He opened the way for the conquest of these regions by later generations of his co-religionists.

(C) Foundations of the Muslim Empire in India were laid by Shahab-ud-Din Ghorī (A.D. 1175-1206). Struggle between the rulers of Ghazni and their feudatories of Ghor went on for about 25 years when Shahab-ud-Din and his elder brother Ghiyas-ud-Din ultimately seized the throne of Ghazni (A.D. 1173) and drove out Bahram Shah, the degenerate descendant of Mahmud of Ghazni. Shahab-ud-Din then turned his attention to India and in the first 10 years, he conquered and annexed Multan, Uchh (Sind) and Lahore which were in the possession of the Muslims. The Ghorī invader then came face to face with the Rajput rulers. Delhi and Ajmer were conquered in A.D. 1192, Kanauj and Benares in 1194. On his retirement from India, Shahab-ud-Din's lieutenants continued the work of conquest. The Chandela rulers of Bundelkhand and the Baghela rulers of Gujarat and the Sena rulers of Bihar and Bengal were deprived of their kingdoms by Kutb-ud-Din Aibak and Ikhtiyar Khalji. Within 30 years, the entire region between the Indus and the Brahmaputra permanently passed into the hands of the Muslims. Thus on comparison one finds that even though Mahmud of Ghazni's victories were more brilliant and spectacular those of Shahab-ud-Din were more lasting and permanent in their results.

(D) In their wars with the Arabs in the 8th century, with the Turks in the 11th and with the Ghorīs in the closing years of the 12th century, the Hindus always suffered serious reverses. Naturally one would ask why these reverses almost on every occasion and more so when we know that, in courage and contempt of death, a Rajput was fully equal, if not better, than his Muslim assailant. The factors that operated in deciding the issue of the war are dealt with in the last three pages of the chapter.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the conquest of Sind by the Arabs and discuss the political and administrative policy of Muhammad Bin Kasim.
2. Why did the Arabs fail to extend their conquests beyond Sind and retain their hold on the province for long?
3. Did the conquest and occupation of Sind by the Arabs bring about any cultural results of permanent value? If so, in what direction?
4. Write a note on the character and nature of Mahmud's invasions. What was the net result of these invasions, so far as the territorial extension of his empire was concerned?
5. So far as it relates to India, Mahmud's work was more of a pioneer than of a builder of an empire. Explain and give your estimate of Mahmud's achievements.
6. Write a note bringing out salient points about Mahmud (i) as soldier (ii) as sovereign (iii) as man.
7. Give an account of Shahab-ud-Din Ghorī's campaigns in India with the aid of a map.

8. "Though not so brilliant or spectacular as those of Mahmud, the victories of Shahab-ud-Din Ghorî were more lasting and permanent in their result." Explain.
9. Discuss the importance of the battle of Tarain (A.D. 1192).
10. Write notes on: Prophet Muhammad and his work; Muhammad Bin Kasim; Raja Dahir; Sabuktigin; Raja Jaipal; Albiruni; Jai Chandar of Kanauj.

CHAPTER XVI

Establishment of Delhi Kingdom

THE SLAVE DYNASTY, A.D. 1206—1290.

During the life time of Shahab-ud-Din Ghori, the Indian territories formed politically an integral part of the Ghorian empire. There was yet no separate Muslim kingdom in India. Shahab-ud-Din left no son but a puppet prince was made to succeed him on the throne. Taj-ud-Din Yalduz made a bid for the vacant throne and so did Kutb-ud-Din Aibak who proceeded to Ghazni immediately on receiving the news of the death of his master. Aibak failed in his original venture but before he returned to India he managed to obtain from the Sultan, 'a letter of manumission together with the paraphernalia of royalty and an authority to rule over Hindustan.' In Hindustan, he had already established his position during the twenty years of his governorship. He was regarded as the strongest and most efficient of the Muslim officers of the Ghori Sultan. To make his position clear, therefore, Aibak got himself proclaimed formally as an independent Sultan in India.¹ The Muslim ruler of India thus ceased to have any political connection with Ghor or Ghazni and the Indian Muslim State began to develop independently from any outside interference.

Kutb-ud-Din was born of obscure parents and was brought from Turkistan to Nishapur in his infancy where he was purchased and kept as a slave by the Qazi of the city. *Kutb-ud-Din: his early life* The Qazi seems to have been a very indulgent master and struck by the intelligent looks of the boy had him instructed in Persian and Arabic. On the death of his master, Kutb-ud-Din was sold to a merchant who presented him to Sultan Shahab-ud-Din, then engaged in one of his western campaigns. He soon acquired his master's favour and was put in command of a body of horse, and, early in his career as a soldier, made his mark for gallantry in one of the border campaigns. Thenceforward the fortunes of Kutb-ud-Din experienced no check, his natural talents had free scope for action,

¹There is no evidence to show that Kutb-ud-Din Aibak struck coins in his name or got the Khutba read in his name. No coin of Aibak has been discovered, nor is his name included in the list of the Sultans whose names Feruz Shah Tughlak had ordered to be inserted in the Friday Khutba.

and whether as a soldier, a general or a political administrator he gained equal distinction.

When Shahab-ud-Din returned to Ghazni after his victory at Tarain A.D. 1192, he nominated Aibak as governor on his behalf. Aibak who had already made his mark as a soldier and shared the views of his master that the conquests made in India should be organized on a permanent basis soon followed up his initial success with vigour and determination. He seized the kingdom of Anhilwara from the Baghela Rajputs and also conquered Bundelkhand from the Chandellas. He encouraged his lieutenant Ikhtiyar Khalji to invade Bihar and Bengal and himself marched against Gwalior. He thus helped considerably in the expansion of the Muslim power in India.

As Viceroy of India

Although Kutb-ud-Din had obtained recognition of his independent position in India from the successors of Muhammad Ghorī, yet he had to guard against the rivalry of his brother slaves who had, like him, strengthened their respective positions in other provinces of the empire.¹ Another potential danger against which the new sovereign of India had to provide was the vast bulk of the Hindu population in the midst of which he was going to plant the political power of Islam. To achieve both ends Kutb-ud-Din proceeded with caution and sagacity. His experience of twenty years' service in India stood him in good stead. He had already done a great deal of fighting in the country and had established his reputation as soldier and general. He had, thus, stolen a march over his colleagues and to strengthen his position further he now entered into matrimonial alliances with some of them. He married the daughter of Taj-ud-Din Yalduz who ruled in Ghazni, gave his sister in marriage to Nasir-ud-Din Kabacha who governed Multan and Sind and bestowed his own daughter on Shams-ud-Din Iltutmish, a promising slave of his own. Ali bin Mardan who had usurped authority in the eastern provinces on the death of Ikhtiyar Khalji was reconciled by diplomatic alliance. Kutb-ud-Din, thus disarmed opposition to his nascent authority as independent sovereign of Delhi. To his Hindu subjects he gave little or no cause for annoyance. "The people" writes a contemporary Muslim chronicler, "were happy, the roads were freed from robbers and the Hindus both high and low were treated with royal benignity." So long as the Hindus paid Jizya they were not interfered with in their social and religious practices.

His policy and achievements

Kutb-ud-Din died at Lahore in A.D. 1210, from an accident at the game known as *Chaugan* or polo. There can be no ques-

¹ More important among these were: Taj-ud-Din Yalduz who ruled in Ghazni, Nasir-ud-Din Kabacha who was supreme in Multan and Sind, and Ikhtiyar Khalji who had established his authority in Bihar and Bengal.

tion of the ability by which he had raised himself from the condition of a slave to that of a king and Muhammadan historians attest not only to his vigour, but to his social virtues and his profound generous liberality which earned for him the name of *lakh-bakhsh* or 'Giver of lakhs.'

Kutb-ud-Din Aibak is believed to have commenced the series of magnificent Muhammadan buildings in India. He used the materials of Hindu temples to erect a Jama Masjid at his capital of Old Delhi. The lofty minaret, the Kutb Minar, is said to have been begun by him, but it was probably finished by his successor, Iltutmish, and it takes its name from the famous saint, Khwaja Kutb-ud-Din, whose tomb is close by.

On Aibak's death, his adopted son, Aram proved quite unequal to the task of governing in those troubled times. A deputation of the nobles of the state, therefore, waited upon Shams-ud-Din Iltutmish, the son-in-law of the late king, and besought him to save the kingdom by accepting the throne. He complied with their wishes, defeated Aram, and was crowned as king at Delhi in January, 1211. It is, in fact, with Iltutmish that the history of Muslim sovereignty begins.

Upon the death of Aibak, the empire was divided into four great portions. The Khaljis represented the power of Islam in Bihar and Bengal; Taj-ud-Din Yalduz, the ruler of Ghazni, had also seized the North-Western Panjab; the valley of the Indus including Sind and Multan was ruled by another of these slaves, named Kabacha; while at Delhi Iltutmish himself was now proclaimed as king. But his Muslim officers and jagirdars were not disposed to obedience. Hindu princes who had been only half-subdued by Aibak were also growing restless. The task before Iltutmish was, indeed, difficult. But he proved equal to the occasion.

Iltutmish belonged to a good family of the Ilbari Turks of Central Asia. His brothers grew jealous of him for his rare intellectual gifts and handsome appearance and sold him away to a merchant of Bokhara. This future sovereign of Delhi again saw a change of masters before he was purchased by Kutb-ud-Din Aibak. Aibak, during his period of governorship employed this promising young slave on posts of trust and responsibility where he gave an excellent account of himself first as fief holder of Gwalior and then of Budaun. As a soldier, Iltutmish had won his spurs in the momentous battle which Sultan Shahab-ud-Din fought with the Khokhars (A.D. 1205). Both Aibak and the Sultan were so pleased with the courage, skill and resourcefulness which Iltutmish displayed on the occasion that they granted

Kutb-ud-Din's buildings

Shams-ud-Din Iltutmish called to the throne A.D.1211

Divisions of the empire on the death of Aibak

Early life of Iltutmish

him manumission. Aibak also gave his daughter in marriage to Iltutmish.

The first three years of his rule Iltutmish spent in establishing his authority over Delhi, Budaun, Oudh and Benares where the local chiefs and Zamindars were growing refractory. In 1214, a chance event in Central Asia threw Yalduz into his hands. The ruler of Khawarzin drove Yalduz from Ghazni and the fugitive ran to Lahore, expelled the garrison of Kabacha and occupied the fort of Lahore. Three years before this date when Yalduz had asserted his authority over the Panjab, Iltutmish had flattered him by accepting from him as ruler of Ghazni, the insignia of royalty for ruling over India. But Iltutmish had no intention to submit to Yalduz, and now that he had seized Lahore, Iltutmish too advanced from Delhi with a large force. Yalduz, too, marched from Lahore and the two forces met at the memorable plain of Thaneswar in January 1216. Yalduz was taken captive and sent to Budaun as a prisoner where he was put to death in the same year.

Iltutmish succeeds in establishing his Authority over Provincial Governors

Iltutmish next endeavoured to reduce Nasir-ud-Din Kabacha, governor of Sind, but failed in his purpose. He then turned his attention towards Bengal where confusion had prevailed since the death of Ikhtiyar Khilji. One Ali Mardan had usurped power in the province but he soon made himself unpopular with the Khilji nobles who raised Hassan-ud-Din Iwaz in his place on the throne of Bengal. Iwaz assumed the title of Sultan Ghiyas-ud-Din and in the course of a couple of years extended his authority over Bihar. On the approach of Iltutmish, however, Iwaz discreetly submitted to him and acknowledged the sovereignty of Delhi. Iltutmish appointed his own governors in Bihar and Oudh and returned to Delhi in 1222.

In 1228 Iltutmish secured the coveted diploma of investiture as the 'Sultan of India' from the Khalifa of Baghdad, the highest pontiff of Islam. The name of the Khalifa was then added to the coins issued by the Sultan. This was the first of the purely Arabic coinage introduced in India.¹ The association of the Khalifa's name to his own, enormously increased the prestige of Iltutmish and as Dr. Ishwari Prasad remarks 'legitimised his authority and silenced those who challenged his claim to the throne on the score of his birth, and gave to his authority the sanction of a name honoured and cherished by the entire Muslim world.'

Investiture by the Khalifa A.D. 1228

In 1228 Iltutmish once more turned against Kabacha who was now worn out by his long struggle with the Mongols and the

¹ The Coins struck by Mahmud Ghaznavi and his Successors bore Sanskrit legend.

Annexation of Sind Khawarzim Shah. The Sultan's task was thus rendered comparatively easy and the mighty governor of Sind was totally routed in a battle near Bhakhar and was either drowned in attempting to escape from the fort in which he was besieged or committed suicide. The province of Sind was, thus, annexed to the empire of Delhi.

His wars with Rajputs Iltutmish was next occupied for upwards of seven years in reducing that part of Hindustan which had remained independent. The Rajputs of Malwa struggled hard to preserve their ancient freedom. Iltutmish began by taking Ranthambor (1226) which had so long been protected by its mountainous situation. He next took Mandu (1227) and then laid siege to the hill fort of Gwalior. The Raja of Gwalior, Mangal Deva, held out for a year, and then fled and the fort was taken. Last of all, Iltutmish reduced the ancient capital of Ujjain (1234) and demolished the Hindu temple of Mahakala, which is said to have contained a statue of the celebrated Vikramaditya. We are told by Firishta that the great temple had taken three hundred years to build, that it was surrounded by a wall a hundred cubits high, and that it contained the image of Mahakala in stone and many images of brass. Thus, by the year 1234, was completed the conquest of the rich fertile province of Malwa which carried the southern boundary of the Sultanate to the Narbada. All Hindustan, except perhaps, some isolated portions, now acknowledged the government of Delhi and the dominions of Iltutmish extended from Sind to Bengal and from the foot of the Himalayas to the river Narbada in the south.

Having reduced several of these Rajput strongholds, Iltutmish returned to Delhi, and died in April, 1236, just as he was about to set out on a journey to Multan. He had *His achievements* reigned twenty-six years with honour, and furnishes 'another instance of self-elevation by his talents from his originally low condition.' He is, indeed, as Sir Wolseley Haig observes, 'the greatest of all the slave kings.' When Iltutmish ascended the throne in 1211, the infant empire of Delhi was threatened with a perilous situation. Of the Muslim rulers and governors, Iwaz Khan in Bengal; Yalduz in Ghazni and North-West Panjab; and Kabacha in Sind and Multan challenged the authority of the ruler of Delhi; whereas some of the Rajput princes who had been reduced to submission by Sultan Aibak were now seeking an opportunity to reassert their independence. Iltutmish proved equal to the occasion, and displayed such vigour and intrepidity in dealing with his foes that he was able to save the empire from early ruin and dismemberment. More than this Iltutmish added two

new provinces to the dominions of Delhi, namely Lower Sind and Malwa, and thus extended the boundary of the empire to the mouth of the Indus in one direction and to the bank of the Narbada in the other. It was this act of consolidation and extension of the empire that had earned for Iltutmish the coveted title of 'Aid of the Commander of the Faithful'—a recognition which in its turn acquired for the Indian Muslims a moral prestige in the Islamic world.

Iltutmish was not only a great conqueror and organiser but he was also fond of the society of the pious and the learned upon whom he bestowed his liberal patronage. The building of the Kutb Minar of Delhi which is believed to have begun by Aibak was completed in the reign of Iltutmish.

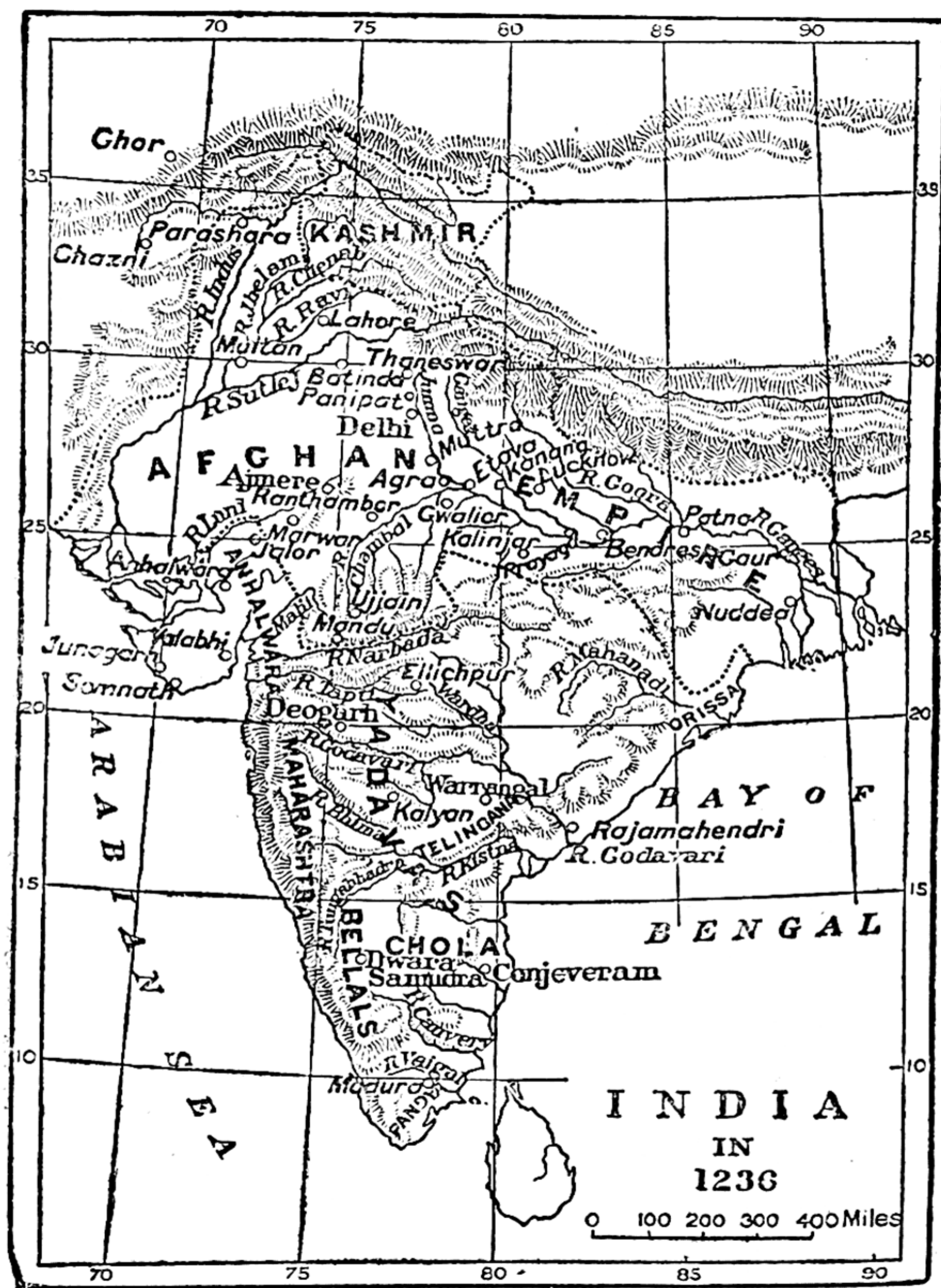
While Iltutmish was waging a fruitless war with Kabacha, the ruler of Sind, the Asiatic world across the Indus was overwhelmed by hosts of Tartars. Fortunately, however, India was saved from the terrible visit of their leader Chingiz Khan. These Tartars were nomad tribes who had been wandering in the neighbourhood of the desert of Gobi for many years under the name of Mongols. It was a great migration of races such as had taken place once before in the fifth century when the Huns swept over Asia and Europe. They are described as ugly barbarians, with yellow complexion, high cheeks, flat noses, small eyes and large mouths. Their history begins with their chieftain named Tamujin who subsequently adopted the style of Chingiz Khan and united these several tribes and assumed the leadership. He was born in 1155, and died in 1227. By sheer force of genius, Chingiz Khan had, in course of time, established his sovereignty over a very large area which was nearly four times as vast as the empire of India. His empire included a large portion of China and all the famous kingdoms of Central Asia: Balkh, Bokhara, Samarkand and Herat. After vanquishing Jalal-ud-Din Mankbarni, the Sultan of Khawarzim or Khiva, Chingiz with his barbaric hordes reached the banks of the Indus but never crossed the river into India, although after his death the Panjab and Sind were frequently exposed to Mongol raids. Nasir-ud-Din Kabacha's resources were exhausted in his struggle with these Mongol raiders and hence he succumbed to Iltutmish when the latter invaded Sind for the second time in 1228.

Iltutmish was succeeded by his younger son Rukn-ud-Din, his elder son, Firuz, having predeceased his father. He was a dissolute youth and was removed from the throne after a scandalous reign of a few months. The nobles of the state then offered the throne according to the will of the late king, to his daughter Raziya Begam. Raziya was no ordinary woman. She possessed great vigour and heroism and had received prac-

*Invasion of
Chingiz Khan
1221*

*Sultana Raziya
A.D. 1236-40*

tical training in the art of administration, being more than once appointed by her father as regent at the capital when Iltutmish had to go out on distant expeditions. Firishta writes of her, comparing her with her brothers:—‘She had a man’s head and



heart and was better than twenty such sons.’ She had no fault, but that she was a woman.

Sultana Raziya was the only female sovereign who ever sat

on the throne of Delhi, and appears to have done her best, in times too stormy for a woman, or for any but the strongest man.¹ She began her administration with an ability and attention to work which gave promise of success. Assuming male attire, she showed herself to the people on an elephant's back and used to sit in open court every day to transact the affairs of the state.

Everything went on smoothly for a time, but the weakness of a woman, as we know, is watched with jealous eyes. The princess was unmarried and the favour which she showed to her Master of the Horse named Yakut, gave offence to many. Many an intrigue was set on foot against her and several provincial governors began to show signs of rebellion. Early in 1239, the Governor of Lahore raised the standard of revolt but the Sultana promptly marched against him and reduced him to obedience. A second revolt was that of Malik Altunia, Governor of Sirhind. She proceeded thither, and laid siege to the strong fortress of Bhatinda but during the operations of the siege she was betrayed to the Malik by her own Turki chiefs who made her a prisoner. In her absence, her brother Bahram was raised to the throne of Delhi by the disaffected nobility. But Raziya did not lose heart. She made one more effort to recover her throne and 'a woman's art was of help to her.' Altunia was won over by the imprisoned queen, and married her and with their combined forces they marched towards Delhi. Raziya was however twice defeated in battle near Kaithal and both she and her husband were killed in October 1240.

Provincial governors become jealous of the Sultana and revolt against her authority

Two more descendants of Iltutmish, a son and a grandson, occupied the throne for a brief period of six years from 1240 to 1246 and then his youngest son, the mild natured Nasir-ud-Din was set up and ruled for twenty years. But the political situation which confronted the empire at the moment required a man of much stronger nerve than himself at the head of the government; and luckily such a man was found in Ulugh Khan Balban. During the twenty years of his rule, Nasir-ud-Din was king only in name, the real power in the state was wielded by Balban who behaved more like a dictator than a minister of the king.

*Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud
A.D. 1246-66*

The personal history of Nasir-ud-Din is briefly told. He was a man of piety and studious habits and was too much pre-occu-

¹It was, indeed, a daring innovation and indicates as Dr. R. P. Tripathi remarks "the freshness and robustness of the Turkish mind in the 13th century, which then seemed to be capable of taking such a bold step and trying such an experiment."

pied with his spiritual and literary hobbies to find time to attend to political matters or meddle with the government of Ulugh Khan. This was, perhaps, one reason why he reigned so long (1246-66). Nasir-ud-Din's ideal of kingship was too high for the age in which he lived. He regarded himself only as a trustee of State funds and would allow himself no more expense than was absolutely necessary. Many legends have grown up round the name of this pious and amiable Sultan. It is said that he used to support himself by making copies of the Koran. Firishta writes of him that he had only one wife who performed all the duties of a careful and industrious housewife. He refused her even the assistance of a servant, and when one day she complained of having burnt her finger in baking bread he exhorted her to persevere and God would reward her.

During the six years preceding the accession of Nasir-ud-Din, the kingdom of Delhi had fallen into disorder. The Mongols whom Chingiz had left behind made many an inroad into the Panjab and the Gangetic valley. The reigning sovereigns, Mulaziz-ud-Din Bahram (1240-41) and Ala-ud-Din Masud (1241-46) proved unequal to the task of defending the empire. In 1241, Mangu, the grandson of Chingiz Khan and father of the celebrated Kubla Khan, ravaged western Panjab and advanced as far as Lahore. Another important expedition of the Mongols was into Bengal by way of Tibet and resulted in the sack of Gaur, the capital of the province. By the time of Nasir-ud-Din's accession to the throne, the Mongols had possessed themselves of all the tracts to the west of the Indus.

The first duty in defence of the empire which the new emperor was called upon to perform, was to provide against the inroads of these barbarian invaders. Be it said to the credit of the minister Balban that he was equal to the emergency. He formed the frontier tracts into one strong province and placed its government under his nephew. The warlike Khokhar tribes of the Panjab who had helped the Mongols and joined with them in their plundering excursions were also ruthlessly punished and reduced to order.¹

The rest of Balban's period of ministership was occupied in putting down the rebellions of Hindu princes in Rajputana and the Doab between the Jumna and the Ganges. The Rajputs, taking advantage of the weak successors of Iltutmish, had recovered the whole country south of the Jumna and again embarked upon a struggle for their independence in Malwa. The imperial

¹These Khokhars had fought stubbornly with Mahmud of Ghazni and Shahab-ud-Din Ghorî. They gave little or no peace to the rulers of the Panjab.

forces were despatched from Delhi under Balban and they succeeded in reducing the Rajputs to submission for the time being. A great battle was fought at Mewat (1259) and several of the forts of the Chandel Rajputs in Bundelkhand were also recaptured. Gwalior, Malwa, Chanderi and Marwar had already been subdued in A.D. 1251-52. During these expeditions, the loss of human life on both sides, especially of the Hindus, is stated to have been very heavy.

This series of unbroken successes of Balban had excited the jealousy of his rivals and many a palace intrigue were set on foot against him. The leader of these intrigues was a renegade Hindu eunuch named Imad-ud-Din Rihan who eventually succeeded in poisoning the ears of the Sultan against the minister. The unwary Sultan was taken in by the intriguers and issued orders for the dismissal of Balban from the post of chief minister. Imad-ud-Din Rihan, was installed as chief minister or Vakil-i-dar at Delhi. But things did not go so well as the intriguers had desired. The maliks and nobles of the court who had joined Rihan found tutelage of this vile eunuch too galling. Requests soon started pouring in upon the Sultan to dismiss the vile upstart and reinstate Balban who was recalled early in 1254.

*Banishment
of Balban
A.D. 1253-54*

Except for this temporary eclipse of authority, Balban held the reins of government tightly in his hands for a period of two decades and saved the state from many a serious danger. He had successfully kept the Mongols in check and strengthened the frontier defences of the empire by repairing the old forts and building new posts at strategic points. He created an efficient army and put down with an iron hand the elements of internal disorder and strife such as the revolts of the Turkish nobles, and the Hindu chieftains and the Mewatee brigands. "But for Balban's vigour and energy," as Dr. Ishwari Prasad observes "the kingdom of Delhi would have hardly survived the shocks of internal revolts and external invasions."

*Balban as
Minister*

On the death of Nasir-ud-Din in 1266 Balban had no difficulty in mounting the throne of Delhi. Nasir-ud-Din was the last surviving member of the family of Iltutmish and with his demise the family had become extinct. There was none who could legitimately contest Balban's personal claim to the vacant throne even though this claim was far too feeble. The only family relationship which Balban could put forward was that the late Sultan was married to his (Balban's) daughter, and that he had nominated him as his successor. This may have just strengthened Balban's position a little, who would, in all events, have seized the vacant throne.

*Sultan Balban
1266-86*

... of Balban

In his capacity of a minister, Balban had wielded the highest authority for twenty years and now that he became the Sultan, he continued to be the highest functionary of the State for another twenty years. Thus, he held his authority unimpaired for nearly forty years and it may be doubted whether in the whole course of the history of India, there is an instance of more durable prosperity than that which marked the career of this fortunate slave.

When Balban took over the responsibility of government as minister in A.D. 1246, the Sultanate was plunged deeply in political and administrative confusion. The forty

The task before Balban Turki slaves who were originally employed by Iltutmish to serve as the Sultan's bodyguard had grown into a body of powerful nobles of the State, and had monopolised almost all the highest posts under the government. Anyone who was not a member of this fraternity had little or no chance of obtaining a position of trust and responsibility. Even the reigning sovereign would not venture to go against their wishes. Sultana Raziya, as we know, lost her throne when she showed a preference for Yakut who was an Abyssinian and not one of the Forty. The power wielded by this strong, notorious and unscrupulous Junta lowered considerably the prestige of the Sultan in the eyes of his subjects.

The Hindu rulers whom Aibak and Iltutmish had subdued broke into revolt again and succeeded in recovering their lost possession. The Zamindars and Jagirdars followed suit and stopped paying the revenues to the State.

Still another and a more serious danger to the peace and stability of the empire came from the Mongols. These ever vigilant barbarians, taking advantage of the helplessness of the government of Delhi during the last decade, began to swoop down upon the plains of the Panjab, and, at times extended their predatory excursions even to the very gates of the imperial city. Again, gangs of robbers, dacoits and highwaymen living in the Doabs, either joined the Mongol-raiders or followed close on their heels and made life in Delhi insecure. It is said that the city gates had to be closed soon after the afternoon prayers.

Balban, thus, had a fourfold task before him; (1) to break the power of the Forty and restore normal administration in the country; (2) to restore the prestige of the Sultan; (3) to put down Hindu revolts; and (4) to provide against the Mongol danger.

Ulugh Khan Balban was the son of a tribal leader of the Ilbari clan of the Turks who held authority over 10,000 families. In his boyhood Ulugh Khan was captured by the Mongols who sold him to a slavedealer of Basra. The latter brought him into India where he was purchased by Sultan Iltutmish (1233) and enrolled in the corps

Balban's gradual rise

of the famous 'Forty Turki Slaves.'¹ After the manner of all these slaves, Ulugh Khan began to mix in political intrigues, and under Sultana Raziya he was promoted to the rank of *Mir-i-Shikar* or Master of the Hunt. He gradually rose higher in the service and obtained in succession the fiefs of Rewari and Hansi. Having now gained both wealth and influence, Ulugh Khan was appointed by Nasir-ud-Din as the chief minister of the state. The emperor was weak and pacific by nature and the astute minister, therefore, used the opportunity to his fullest personal advantage. 'He used,' as Zia-ud-Din Barani characteristically remarks, 'his master's (Iltutmish's) sons as a show.' This maintenance of a '*roi faineant*' proved useful to Balban since his rival fellow-slaves (the Forty) were thrown into the shade and his own great deeds and services rendered him more and more conspicuous and more able to stand alone when the time came to seize the vacant throne for himself. Balban's life, it may be remarked, affords another instance in the history of those Turki slaves who rose to sovereignty throughout Asia and who for a long time furnished a succession of rulers to India.

Balban's reign was distinguished by the same qualities that had marked his conduct as minister and he proved himself a vigorous but severe and merciless ruler. A leading feature of his policy was the defence of the realm against the Mongols. They had, indeed, become a grave menace to the empire. Balban realised the seriousness of the danger and proceeded to undertake measures for the safety of the realm. From Delhi to the frontier of the empire, the old fortresses were repaired, and a connected chain of new forts were built on the route followed by the Mongol invaders and all of them were provided with strong and trustworthy garrisons. Of the newly built ones, the forts of Bhatinda, Sirsa, Abohr and Bhatnair, were the strongest. These were situated at the angles of a nearly square figure, with a side about 50 miles long, and formed a quadrilateral of forts in the path of invaders from the northwest. Balban also reorganised the government of the frontier provinces of Multan and Samana and placed these in charge of his two sons. The Mongol raids were thus checked for the time being. In 1285, however, they appeared again and invaded the Panjab under their leader Samar. Prince Muhammad Khan who held charge of Multan marched towards Lahore to repel their attack. The enemy was, no doubt beaten back, but it was a pyrrhic victory for the Sultan, as prince Muhammad, was slain in an ambush.

The danger of Mongol invasion persuaded the Sultan early

¹ Iltutmish was also an Ilbari Turk and naturally felt drawn towards his clansman. He appointed Balban on his personal establishment as *Khasa-bardar* and later on gave his daughter in marriage to Balban.

in his reign to reorganize his army service, particularly the cavalry and the elephantry branches; which he placed under efficient and loyal captains. This organization came handy to Balban when he was called upon to put down the rebellions of his provincial governors. Tughril Khan, the governor of Bengal and a favourite slave of Balban, had assumed independence and issued coins in his own name. The powerful viceroy twice defeated the imperial armies sent against him. In 1281, the aged monarch himself, therefore, took the field. The rebel governor fled on the approach of the emperor but the old Sultan was determined on vengeance. "I am playing for half of my kingdom" he said, and "I will never return to Delhi, till the blood of the rebel and his followers is poured out." A vigorous pursuit was made and the insurgent governor fled into the forests but was discovered and slain. Balban took a terrible revenge on the rebellious city. The long bazar street was lined with gibbets on which were hung the bodies of Tughril's kinsmen and all who had taken part in the rising, and before leaving Gaur, he enforced the moral on his son, Bughra Khan, whom he now placed in charge of the province. 'Didst thou see, Mahmud?' he asked. The surprised prince making no answer, the question was repeated again and yet again. 'Didst thou see my punishments in the streets of Gaur?' he explained. 'If ever you feel inclined to waver in your allegiance remember what you saw here.'¹

Balban was stern and pitiless when policy appeared to require such qualities and Mr. Vincent Smith quotes from a Muslim historian, 'the disgusting details of merciless executions ordered by the Sultan in connection with the putting down of the Mewatee rebellion.' The Meos of Mewat (south of Delhi) were a constant source of trouble to the authorities at Delhi. In spite of the vigilance of the city guards they used to creep into the city under the cover of darkness and commit their predatory raids. So great was their audacity that the government had to resort to the practice of closing the city gates after the time of the afternoon prayers. Emboldened by their unchecked highway robberies, the Meos had, on one occasion carried off a large number of camels belonging to the imperial army. Balban marched in person against Mewat and put down the brigands with such severity that the country was quieted for sixty years. The Mewatees were put to death indiscriminately and the greater part of their country was cleared of forest and cultivated. In January 1260, the army returned from Mewat with their prisoners.

¹ *A Sketch of the History of Hindostan*, by H. G. Keene, p. 35.

'By royal command many of the rebels were cast under the feet of elephants and the fierce Turks cut the bodies of the Hindus in two. About a hundred met their death at the hands of the flayers, being skinned from head to foot, their skins were all stuffed with straw, and some of them were hung over every gate of the city. The plain of Hauz-Rani and the gates of Delhi remembered no punishment like this, nor had one heard such a tale of horror.'¹

Similarly, the rebel Hindu chiefs of the Gangetic Doab were put down with ruthless repression. They had their strongholds in thick forests in out of the way places which afforded them easy shelter. They proved a constant source of trouble to the merchants plying their trade between Delhi and Bengal.

The rebels of the Doab

The governors of Budaun and Amroha were unable to cope with the situation. The Sultan, therefore, resorted to the plan of granting fiefs in these regions to powerful nobles with large and discretionary powers to maintain order and clear the jungles which harboured these 'disturbers of peace.'

We have had occasion to remark earlier in these pages that after the death of Iltutmish, the "Forty" had become the supreme controlling power in the state. The Sultan of Delhi was almost at their mercy. Balban himself was one of these "Forty," and he knew how dangerous it would be to underrate their influence. At the same time he was determined to be the king and the ruler. He therefore made it a point of his administrative policy to break the political back-bone of this Junta. On one pretext or another some of them were sent far away from the court while all were compelled to render due homage to the Sultan and the offenders were punished with utmost severity in the name of justice and humanity. Malik Barbaq, the fief holder of Budaun is reported to have caused one of his servants to be beaten to death; and when the widow of the man demanded justice from Balban, the Malik was flogged to death. It is further related that even the newswriter who had suppressed the news from the court was hanged over the city gate. Another of the powerful "Forty" namely Haibat Khan, for almost a similar offence received 500 stripes and redeemed his life with a great sum; and yet another who had been unfortunate to suffer a defeat at the hands of the rebels was hanged over the gate of the city which he had ruled.

Balban and the Forty

We are not sure whether Kutb-ud-Din Aibak struck coins and got the Khutba read in his own name; and whether he was regarded as the sovereign ruler of Delhi by other Muslim military commanders. Iltutmish, we are told by contemporary writers,

Balban's view of kingship

¹ Quoted by V. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, p. 228

professed shyness to sit on the throne or to lord over the great Turkish officers whom he regarded as his equals. Balban's conception of kingship was, however, altogether different. He regarded the king as the vicar of God and far above other members of the state. He maintained and with good deal of reason that the attitude of Iltutmish eventually led to the undermining of the dignity, prestige and power of the kingly office and that is why the nobles of the state flouted the authority of the Sultan. His one aim, during his period of rule, was to raise the prestige of the throne which he occupied.

He was anxious to make the crowned head of Delhi a magnificent institution of the type of the old Persian monarchy. Accordingly, he introduced in spite of the opposition of the Ulemas, the Persian custom of Zaminbos which required all who attended the court to prostrate before the Sultan. He also introduced the Persian festival of Navroz. Even the names he gave to his grandsons were Persian names like Kai Khusrau and Kaikubad. He kept strict discipline in his court and avoided intimacy with his officers and servants. He was never seen to laugh and permitted no joking in his presence.

During his reign the court of Delhi became a place of refuge for the Shahs and Sultans of Bokhara and Turkistan who were driven from their kingdoms by the invasion of the Mongols. There were as many as fifteen exiled princes living at the court of Delhi and the

Balban's court

Sultan took great pride in relieving and supporting them with every mark of hospitality. The fugitives, in their turn, helped to keep the Mongol raiders in check and strengthened the Muslim forces in their campaigns against the insurgent Rajput princes. Many eminent literary men, historians, poets and doctors of Islamic Law also came with the fugitive kings and gave a literary distinction to the court of Balban. Chief and most notable among these was the famous Amir Khusrau¹ whose verses have become part of the folk-lore of Northern India. Balban is also said to have invited the poet Sa'adi to visit him from Shiraz though the great poet excused himself on the ground of old age.

Ghiyas-ud-Din Balban died in 1286 of shock at the death of his eldest son, Prince Muhammad. The prince was slain whilst repelling the Mongol invasion against Multan and the aged Sultan (for Balban was now nearly eighty years of age) sank under the blow.

*Death of
Balban*

¹ Amir Khusrau (1253-1325) was born in a village near Delhi where his father had settled after leaving his home in Turkistan. His father bestowed great care on his early education and when he came of age Khusrau exhibited real genius for poetry. He wrote extensively, though only a small portion of his poetical works has been preserved for posterity. Khusrau was given the rank of a noble for his literary distinction. He was in the service of Prince Muhammad and was made captive by the Mongols when his patron was killed while fighting near Multan in 1285. (See P. 265).

Balban is regarded by some historians as the greatest Muslim ruler of the Pre-Mughal days; and, indeed, he deserves that honour. His public career which extends over a period of forty years is unique in the annals of mediaeval India. As minister of Nasir-ud-Din, Balban retained in his own hands all the threads of administration. It was this long experience as minister that enabled him, when he ascended the throne of Delhi, to re-establish order within the empire and to restore prestige and dignity to the kingly office. His wise and great measures brought about peace and tranquillity in the country which were sorely needed at the moment. The reorganization of the frontier provinces of Samana, Multan and Bhatinda enabled the Sultan to repel with success the invasions of the Mongols. Similarly the re-organization of the army department greatly added to the efficiency of the imperial forces and the Sultan was able to suppress the activities of the Hindu princes which were a perpetual source of danger to the stability of the Muslim empire. His stern measures against the oppressive nobility were calculated to engender a feeling among the common people, that even-handed justice will be dealt to all and sundry. ✱

*Achievements
of Balban*

The administrative machinery of Delhi was completely thrown out of gear during the thirty years that had elapsed since the death of Iltutmish. The feudal lords committed all sorts of excesses and acts of highhandedness upon the poor ryots. They had usurped the lands for which they paid no revenues to the state. Balban took vigorous measures against them, ordered an enquiry into their title deeds and confiscated such fiefs for which the holder could not produce one. In all important administrative matters, the Sultan reserved for himself the issuing of final orders. He made it a working principle of his policy that justice should be done in all cases and the offender must be punished whether he was rich or poor.

*Civil & military
reforms of
Balban*

The danger of Mongol invasion had persuaded the Sultan, early in his reign, to reorganise his army service. The cavalry and the elephantry branches were thoroughly overhauled and were placed under efficient and loyal captains. Steps were taken to provide strong defences for the frontiers. On the route followed by the Mongols, old forts were repaired and new ones on strategic points were built. There was hardly any branch of public administration that did not come under his purview and had not had the benefit of Balban's reform scheme.

Balban did not hold high opinion about the abilities of his second son, Bughra Khan, governor of Bengal. He, therefore, nominated his grandson, Kai Khusrau (son of the deceased prince Muham) as his heir. His disposition of the kingdom

*End of the
Slave Dynasty
A.D. 1287-1290*

was not, however, carried out after his death. Kaikubad another grandson (son of Bughra Khan) a handsome and engaging youth of eighteen, was raised to the throne.¹ There was a touching meeting between the parent and the son in the course of which the father gave his son much good advice. But all advice was in vain and Kaikubad proved a worthless and profligate king who spent all his time in drunken revels and orgies. The business of the state was left in the hands of the vile favourites whose arrogant conduct incensed the nobles of the court. Kaikubad was removed from the throne after a short reign of three years and with him the dynasty of the slave kings ceased to exist.

From A.D. 1206 to 1290, a period of eighty-four years, ten kings, originally slaves, and their descendants, had reigned over India, but the times were so violent and full of

Character of the Slave Dynasty and the political results of the early Muslim domination

war and bloodshed that out of these ten only three died peacefully in their beds. The others were killed. Of these ten, one was a woman, Sultana Raziya, Iltutmish's daughter, the most interesting figure in the slave dynasty; and of the rest only three are deserving of remembrance, namely, Kutb-ud-Din, Iltutmish and Balban

who spread the Muhammadan empire from the Indus to the Brahmaputra. Ever since the establishment of Muslim rule at Delhi (1193-94) there had been constant fighting in Northern India. The Hindu princes did not yield without a hard struggle. By the close of the thirteenth century, the Muhammadan conquerors had acquired a tolerably firm hold over the regions between the foot of the Himalayan and the Vindhya ranges, which included the rich and fertile plains of the Panjab, Sind, the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh and Bihar. Malwa and Gujarat continued to be governed by independent Hindu princes and Bengal or Gaur practically formed an independent kingdom, though at times, the suzerain of Delhi enforced submission and allegiance from his powerful viceroys of the eastern province.

On the constitutional side a strange principle had been evolved and accepted by the Turkish nobility. The right of a house to rule—as that of Iltutmish and Balban—was accepted yet the principle of election for the kingship was also adjusted along with it, as in the case of Raziya and that of Kaikubad.

Another event of great consequence which happened during the early Muhammadan invasions of India, was the migration

¹The election of Kaikubad demonstrates a strange sort of constitutional principle adopted by the Turkish nobility. He was elected king while his father was alive, healthy and strong. Again, the recommendation of the late Sultan that Kai Khusrau must be placed on the throne was not accepted. On a previous occasion too, they had introduced a new principle when they had permitted Raziya to mount the throne in preference to her brothers.

of the chief Rajput tribes from their original homes in the Jumna Doab, to the country all round the Aravalli hills, which has from that time been known as Rajputana. Being unable to maintain the struggle against the invading Turks, the proud warriors retreated to places comparatively more secure, and founded new principalities in which they were able to maintain their independence for a few more centuries.

The country in the possession of the Sultans of Delhi had the appearance of a vast military camp. The whole empire of Delhi was divided into military fiefs each of which was held by a military captain who discharged some of the functions of a provincial governor though his chief concern was to watch and guard the political interests of the empire.¹ Bayana, Gwalior, Nagaur, Sirhind, Hansi, Bhatinda, Sammana, Uchh, Multan and Lahore were some of the more important fiefs on the south, west and the north-west of Delhi making a sort of phalanx against Rajputana and also guarding against invasions from Central Asia. Similarly, the estates of Sambhal, Budaun and Oudh served as outposts of the empire on the east against the Hindu rulers of the mountainous regions. These fief-holders had their armed retainers and standing armies which formed their chief source of strength. "The army," says the author of Minhaj-ud-Din Siraj, "is the source and means of government." But it must be remembered that the Muslim rule was not so firmly established even within the dominions under the jurisdiction of Delhi. The districts on the north-western frontiers of the empire were constantly devastated by the Mongols; the warlike Khokhar clans living in the regions of the lower Himalayan hills (modern Jhelum district) were only partially subdued; some of the strongholds of the Hindu bandit chiefs in the Ganges Doab harried the eastern frontiers of the Sultanate; and nearer Delhi, the Mewatees were a source of constant annoyance to the authorities of the imperial city.

*Feudal nobility
and system of
defence*

Living under such unsettled conditions as they were, one cannot expect that the Sultans of Delhi would have made any serious attempts to solve the problems of civil government or to have tried to introduce the fine arts on any large scale. However, they wisely refrained from meddling with the existing institutions for the administration of civil justice in towns and villages and these, therefore, continued to function. The Panchayats decided the disputes to which Hindus only were parties. Disputes between Muslims were decided according to Muslim

*Administration
of civil govern-
ment*

¹The feudal government of the Sultans of Delhi differed from the feudal system of Europe. In the European feudal system the fiefholder had either hereditary or personal title to his fief but the fief-holders of Delhi had no such claims. They were often transferred from one fief to another.

Law by the Qazi and the Mufti. The revenues were collected through the native Hindu agency in the villages.

NOTES

The first set of slave rulers and governors like Kutb-ud-Din, Kabacha and Yalduz supplied the nucleus of the Muslim empire in India. The adventurer, Ikhtiyar Khalji extended the dominions of Delhi in the east by conquering Bihar and Bengal. Among those of the second generation, Iltutmish and Balban are the most noteworthy. Iltutmish saved the infant empire from ruin and dismemberment by putting down the resistance offered to the authority of the Sultan of Delhi by Kabacha, Yalduz and the Khalji governors of Bihar and Bengal. He made also valuable additions to his dominions by the conquest of Sind and Malwa and also secured for the Sultan of Delhi, a status in the Islamic world by obtaining from the Khalifa of Baghdad the title of the "Aid of the Commander of the Faithful." Balban, during the forty years of his effective control over the affairs of the state, broke the political backbone of the Turkish nobility (the Forty), raised the dignity of the kingly office, suppressed provincial revolts and Hindu disaffection and struck deep the roots of the Muslim power into the soil of India. Besides this, Balban strengthened the north-western frontiers of the empire and protected it from the inroads of the Mongols.

The period of rule of the Slave kings demonstrates the merits of the slave system of succession by which the most capable men of this class were selected for positions of ministers and kings in preference to the inefficient and unworthy sons of the rulers. (See also the last three pages of the chapter).

Serial No.	NAME	Date, A.D.	REMARKS
1	Kutb-ud-Din Aibak	1206-10	The first Sultan of Delhi. As Ghoris viceroy of India (1193-1206) he waged wars against the Chandella Rajputs of Bundelkhand and captured their strongholds of Kalpi and Kalanjar; invaded Gujarat-Kathiawar; 'From a slave to a Sultan' sums up the history of this remarkable man. Died in Lahore in 1210.
2	Aram Shah ..	1210-11	Son of Aibak, ruled for twelve months and was then dethroned and subsequently killed.
3	Iltutmish ..	1211-36	Slave and son-in-law of No. 1. About the greatest of the slave kings. Subdued the refractory Muslim chieftains (Kabacha, Yalduz and the Khalji ruler of Bengal), added Sind and Malwa to the dominions of Delhi; minted first Arabic coin in

Serial No.	NAME.	Date, A.D.	Remarks
			India; obtained recognition of his title from the Khalifa of Baghdad. Died a natural death. Another instance of self-elevation from a slave to a sovereign.
4	Rukn-ud-Din ..	1236	Son of No. 3, was deposed after a reign of about seven months and placed in confinement.
5	Raziya Begam ..	1236-40	Full title Sultana Raziyyat-ud-Din, daughter of Iltutmish. The only female sovereign who sat on the throne of Delhi, was killed in 1240.
6	Bahram ..	1240-41	Full title Mu'aziz-ud-Din Bahram, son of Iltutmish, seized the throne from his sister, Razia, was deposed and killed.
7	Ala-ud-Din ..	1241-46	Full title Ala-ud-Din Masud; grandson of Iltutmish (son of No. 4). Deposed, confined and killed.
8	Nasir-ud-Din ..	1246-66	Full title Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud, son of Iltutmish, Died a natural death. <i>A son</i>
9	Balban ..	1266-86	Full title Ghiyas-ud-Din Balban. Originally one of the 'forty slaves' of Iltutmish, was twenty years Chief Minister, twenty years king. He is regarded as the greatest of the Muslim rulers of the pre-Mughal days; put down with an iron hand the revolts of Hindu and Muslim governors, restored order and peace with his policy of blood and iron; provided effective checks against the inroads of the Mongols; restored dignity of the kingly office and maintained a sober and dignified court. Died a natural death.
10	Kaikubad ..	1286-90	Grandson of Balban. Deposed and killed.

QUESTIONS

1. Give an account of the work and achievements of Kutb-ud-Din Aibak.
2. "The history of Muslim sovereignty in India begins properly speaking with Iltutmish." Explain this and make an estimate of the value of Iltutmish's work.
3. Sketch the career of Balban and explain why he is regarded, by some historians, as the greatest Muslim ruler of the pre-Mughal days.
4. Review the growth and spread of the Muslim power in India between A.D. 1206 and A.D. 1290.

Causes of the muslim Success,

CHAPTER XVII

Expansion and Consolidation

THE KHALJI DYNASTY, A.D. 1290—1320.

Kaikubad having been killed, the sceptre now passed from the hands of the Ilbari Turks into the hands of the Afghans known as the Khaljis. Between them and the Turks there was no love lost. Muhammad Ikhtiyar Khalji had conquered Bihar and Bengal in 1202-03 and retained possession of these provinces as the representative, first of the Ghori Sultan, and then of Kutb-ud-Din Aibak. After Ikhtiyar, several others of his clan ruled in the kingdom of Gaur in succession. The Khaljis had also held many offices in other parts of the Sultanate of Delhi and thus formed a strong party in the state. Their leader at this time was Firuz Shah, the muster-master (Bakhshi) of the army whom, they now placed on the throne with the title of Sultan Jalal-ud-Din. The new Sultan of their choice was not, however, a success. He was a gentle old man of about seventy and consequently not suited to those rough times. With the inhabitants of Delhi, particularly with the Turkish element of the population, the election of Jalal-ud-Din was very unpopular and he was regarded as a usurper. He did not, therefore, venture to reside in Delhi and was obliged to stay in an unfinished palace at Kulghari, a village on the banks of the Jumna outside the city. Not until a year had passed and his virtues had found favour with the people, did he venture within the walls of the city and seat himself on the throne of the kings of Delhi.

*Jalal-ud-Din
Khalji's
assumption of
royal power*

The Turkish nobles who had been deprived of their power and privileges by the ascendancy of the Khaljis engineered revolts and disorders in the early years of Jalal-ud-Din's rule. The first of the series of these revolts was headed by Kishlu Khan popularly known as Malik Chajju. The Malik was the nephew of the late Sultan Balban and was governor of Kara. He marched on Delhi but was defeated near Budaun by the imperial forces commanded by prince Arkali Khan. Kishlu Khan was taken captive but the Sultan spared the rebels and forgave freely, saying that at his age, when he was preparing for the next world, he was not willing to shed the blood of fellow-Muslims.

*Anti-Khalji
party and their
revolts*

The affair of the Sidi Maula was also connected with the revolutionary activities of the anti-Khalji party. The Maula was a pious Muslim saint who had settled in Delhi during the reign of Balban. At this time he was at the height of popularity and his Khangah was visited by rich and poor alike. He used to entertain people on a lavish scale but had no ostensible source of income. The anti-Khalji party decided to marry a daughter of the late Sultan Nasir-ud-Din to Sidi Maula obviously with the intention of giving him a sort of title to the throne and using his popularity against the Khalji house. The darwesh was summoned to the court and executed by the orders of the Sultan.

Owing to these disturbances, the machinery of government was seriously dislocated. The dacoits and freebooters became more daring. On one occasion as many as one thousand of these Thugs were captured in the city of Delhi. But the mild-natured Sultan, instead of punishing them, gave the culprits a long sermon on the evils of theft and then ordered that they should be sent down the river as a present to the governor of Bengal who had set himself up as an independent ruler of the province.

The Mongols under their leader Halaku Khan invaded Hindustan, but the imperial forces defeated them and a large number of them were massacred. Even on this occasion, the Sultan displayed his misplaced generosity in dealing with the beaten enemy. A large number of them were allowed to settle in the suburbs of Delhi where they built a colony of their own. This Mughalpura or Mongolpura subsequently developed into a centre of intrigue and disaffection and became a source of constant annoyance to the rulers of Delhi.

The rest of the history of his reign is little more than a story of the early life and exploits of the Sultan's nephew Ala-ud-Din.

The sturdy Rajputs of Malwa still struggled for independence and in the beginning of 1293, the Sultan marched into Ujjain and once more reduced them to obedience. Two years after he marched to Mandu and devastated the country, and his nephew Ala-ud-Din, now rising into notice, reduced the Hindus of Bhilsa and plundered the famous Buddhist monasteries of Central India. Jalal-ud-Din was pleased with the success of his nephew, and made him governor of Oudh in addition to Kora.

Encouraged by his success in Central India, Ala-ud-Din cherished the idea of making an expedition southwards into countries as yet unpenetrated by Muhammadans. He had heard, while at Bhilsa, of the riches of Deogiri (Daultabad) the capital of the Yadav princes. He accordingly obtained

Mongol invasion under Halaku Khan

War with the Rajputs of Ujjain and Bhilsa

First Muslim invasion of the Deccan

permission from his uncle, and with 8,000 horses set out, in the year 1294, for the Deccan. It was a daring endeavour, and Ala-ud-Din accomplished it with his usual vigour. He marched 700 miles through the wilds and forests of the Vindhya (through Berar and Khandesh) and suddenly appeared before Deogiri in the Maratha country.¹ Ramchandra, the Yadav king of Deogiri, was taken by surprise and was defeated, and his son, Shankar Deva, who came up later with a large army from his provincial tour to the succour of his father, was also defeated after an obstinate battle. Ala-ud-Din raised the siege of the fort on payment of an immense ransom² besides the cession of the tract of country known as Ellichpur. This was the first footing which the Muhammadans obtained south of the Vindhya and, as such, is a notable event in the history of the country. This event took place, as already stated, in 1294, just a hundred years after the conquest of northern India by Muhammad Ghori. Within these hundred years, almost the whole of northern India was conquered by the Muslims while the Deccan and the South looked idly on. Now came the turn of the Deccan and the southern kingdoms who had to fight their battles single-handed.

After his conquest of Ellichpur, Ala-ud-Din, laden with valuable plunder, returned to his government of Kora. The old Sultan felt a great attachment for his nephew and was impatient to see him. This exhibition of regard and affection was not, perhaps, un-
*Murder of
Jalal-ud-Din
1296.*
mixed with the love of lucre since the conquest and plunder of Deogiri was made in the name of the Sultan of Delhi, and he had, therefore, a legitimate claim to a share of the spoils. The Sultan, accordingly, started from Delhi, July 1296, on his way to Kora to meet his nephew. His nobles who had their suspicions, gave him timely warnings of the treasonable intentions of Ala-ud-Din, but the doting old uncle and father-in-law paid no heed to them and went with only a few followers into a barge on the river. As he disembarked from his vessel, Ala-ud-Din met him with a show of the greatest affection, but while the king was caressing him and leading him back to the barge, two of Ala-ud-Din's guards, at a signal from him, fell upon the old Sultan and murdered him. 'His head was struck on a spear and carried round the camp. A lavish distribution of gold secured the adhesion of the army to the usurper and Ala-ud-Din became Sultan (July, 1296).'³

¹ Ala-ud-Din told a very plausible story during his march to Deogiri. He said he was a nephew of the Sultan of Delhi and he had quarrelled with his uncle, and was going to take service under a Raja in Telingana. No one, therefore, stopped him on his way as no one suspected his designs.

² The ransom and war indemnity amounted to more than 17,000 pounds of gold, 200 pounds of pearl, 58 pounds of other gems, besides 2,800 pounds of silver and 1,000 pieces of silk.

³ V. Smith *Oxford History of India*, p.231.

Ala-ud-Din then marched upon Delhi with all the available troops he had at his command. On his way he scattered gold freely out of the vast spoils he had collected from the South and thus secured the loyalty of the governors of different districts that lay on his route to Delhi. On reaching the capital, however, the usurper was confronted with a difficult situation. The Jalali nobles had not yet forgotten the murder of their chief and secretly plotted to avenge it. Qadar Khan, the son of the late king, had, with the help of his nobles, proclaimed himself king of Delhi with the title of Rukn-ud-Din Ibrahim. The Dowager Queen, Malika Jahan, was also active in the interests of her sons Qadar and Arkali. But Ala-ud-Din knew full well that he could achieve anything if he only unloosened the strings of his long purse. By means of lavish gifts and presents therefore, he gained the goodwill of the nobles and the people who now deserted the cause of Rukn-ud-Din and flocked to his standard. Thus deserted, the two sons of the late Sultan fell into Ala-ud-Din's hands, who threw them into dungeon and got their eyes put out. Some of the leading nobles of the realm who had adhered to their cause also suffered terrible punishment. Having thus paralysed all or most of the opposition, Ala-ud-Din mounted the throne on October 20, 1296. The Khutba was read and coins were struck in his name.

The man who thus waded to the throne in blood, proved to be one of the strongest of the Muhammadan rulers. He greatly increased the extent of the Delhi kingdom and considerably added to its resources. In fact, it was with the reign of Ala-ud-Din that the imperial period of the Sultanate began and the authority of the kings of Delhi was extended over the whole of the Indian peninsula. The chronology of the reign is, however, uncertain and the exact order and sequence of political events is yet far from settled.

Ala-ud-Din's first efforts were probably directed against Gujarat. The rich province, besides being a land of great fertility, commanded all the sea-borne trade of India with the countries of the West. It included Broach, Sopara, Cambay and a good many other ports which from time immemorial had carried on active maritime trade which provided a source of considerable revenue to the ruler of the province. Muhammadan rulers like Mahmud, Muhammad Ghorî and Kutb-ud-Din had ravaged and plundered the kingdom of Gujarat but under its resourceful rulers the country had regained its prosperity. Ala-ud-Din sent a strong force under Ulugh Khan in 1297, and Anhilwara, the old capital was again taken. The Raja Rai Karan fled; his queen Kamla Devi fell into the hands of the Muslims and was sent to Delhi.

Opposition to Ala-ud-din's succession.

Ala-ud-Din—the strongest of the early Muhammadan rulers

Conquest of Gujarat, 1297.

Ala-ud-Din himself was captivated by her charms and took her into his harem. The whole of Gujarat was brought under Muhammadan rule and Muhammadan governors were appointed. The Hindu rule in Gujarat thus came to an end.

It was during this expedition that a raid was made on the rich city of Cambay and that Ulugh Khan obtained from a merchant there, a handsome slave boy who subsequently became famous as Malik Kafur and was destined to play an important part in and after the reign of Ala-ud-Din.

2 The Gujarat campaign was no sooner ended than the king had to encounter a very dangerous invasion by the Mongols. During the last fifty years or more they had made several attempts to wrest India from its Turkish rulers. Ghiyas-ud-Din Balban had made vigorous efforts to check the tide of Mongol invasions, but did not fully succeed in his endeavour. They had since invaded India again and again, but had been successfully driven off with heavy losses. In 1298, they marched again under their leader Kutlugh Khan with a force of about 2,00,000 and advanced as far as the Jumna and the city of Delhi was filled with panic-stricken fugitives. A council of war was summoned to plan ways and means to cope with the formidable foe. Ala-ud-Din at last advanced against the invaders with an army of 3,00,000 horses and 2,700 elephants commanded by his bravest and most experienced officers, Zaffar Khan and Ulugh Khan. The fight raged furiously and Zaffar Khan delivered a tremendous attack upon the enemy. The Mongols sustained very heavy losses and were pursued for nearly thirty miles. Although Zaffar Khan lost his life in the action, his ruthless destruction of the ranks of the enemy struck terror in the hearts of the Mongols.¹ But these people possessed such wonderful power of recuperation that in the two following years they repeated their invasions although each time they suffered a crushing defeat. During their last raid several of the Mongol military captains were captured alive and were trampled under the feet of elephants by the order of the Sultan.

*Mongol raids
near Delhi*

3 After repelling the last invasion of the Mongols, Ala-ud-Din adopted defensive measures to strengthen his frontiers in order to create an effective barrier against possible future attacks of these nomadic hordes. He renewed the frontier policy of Balban and ordered all posts, old and new, that lay along

*Measures for
the defence of
the frontier*

¹It is said that the Mongols were so frightened that afterwards when their cattle refused to drink water, they used to ask if they had seen Zaffar Khan. This will remind the reader of two other similar instances, namely, of Ahmad Shah Abdali who became a terror to the inhabitants of the Panjab about the middle of the eighteenth century and of the more recent instance of Hari Singh Nalwa—the brave Sikh general with whose name the Pathan women still frighten their fretful children.

the route of the Mongols to be repaired and fortified. The districts of Dipalpur and Samana were entrusted to officers of tried loyalty and a vigilant watch was kept over the route of the invaders. The result was that so long as Ala-ud-Din lived the Mongols did not dare to make their appearance in Hindustan.

Freed from the Mongol danger and tempted by the alluring prospects of sovereignty over all Hindustan, Ala-ud-Din formed bold plans of conquest. His first attack was launched on the Hindu chiefs of Rajputana, who, a century before, were the masters of Northern India, and were yet considered powerful enough to be a potential danger to the stability of the Muslim power in the country. That the Rajput danger was regarded as a real danger is also illustrated by an episode mentioned by the contemporary historian Zia Barani. Sultan Ala-ud-Din, writes Barani, once conceived the idea of establishing a new religion and creed which, he believed, he would be able to force upon people with the help of his sword. He also entertained the idea of world conquest and of emulating Alexander the Great. When he consulted Qazi Ala-ul-Mulk on these points, the Qazi persuaded the Sultan to let alone religion, as religions and creeds were the preserves of Prophets and Apostles. As to his ambition for world conquest, the Qazi is reported to have said that the conquest of unsubdued provinces of India must take precedence over every other scheme of conquest. The whole of Rajputana, said the Qazi, remains yet to be subdued. "Places like Ranthambor, Chitor, Chanderi, Malwa and Ujjain should all be reduced to such obedience that the name of rebel should never be heard." Another and more important task that awaited the Sultan's attention, the Qazi pointed out, was the closing of the road of Multan against the Mongols.

In 1299, the forces of the Sultan besieged the famous fortress of Ranthambor. Rana Hamir Deo offered stubborn resistance.

Sharp skirmishes went on for some time during which the imperial army suffered heavy losses in men and officers. Nusrat Khan, one of the four best generals of Ala-ud-Din received a fatal hit from a stone discharged from a catapult in the fort. The imperialists were compelled to suspend hostilities for the time being partly because of the Rajput resistance and partly because of the receipt of the news of a serious rising in Delhi engineered by the Kotwal Haji Maula. The rebellion was, however, immediately suppressed and the siege of Ranthambor was renewed with fresh vigour in the following year, and was pushed on for nearly eleven months. But the imperialists failed to create much impression on the brave Rajput garrison till the traitor Wazir Ranmal came to the

*Fall of
Ranthambor,
1302.*

Sultan's succour and betrayed his master. The brave Hamir Deo and his family were put to the sword and so were all the Mongols who had helped him in defence of the fort.

Amongst the Mongol officers of Rana Hamir Deo there was one Muhammad Shah who was seriously wounded and made captive and brought before Ala-ud-Din. The Sultan asked him what he would do if his wounds were dressed and his life was saved. The vanquished hero was so devoted to the Rana that he replied in a scornful pride "If I recover from my wounds I would have thee slain and raise the son of Hamir Deo upon the throne."

The story of the devoted Mongol

The fort of Chitor was taken in August 1303. As usual the brave Rajputs of Mewar made a heroic resistance, but being overpowered by the greater number of the enemy, the fortress fell after a long siege,—all the Rajput women perishing on the pyre and all the Rajput warriors falling by the sword.¹

Fall of Chitor, 1303.

The administration of Chitor was entrusted to Prince Khizr Khan and the name of the place was accordingly changed from Chitor to Khizrabad. But the sensual prince could not hold the place for more than eight years. Ala-ud-Din replaced him by Maldev, a local Rajput chief who held it for about seven years. Even this arrangement failed and Rana Hamir was able to recover the ancient stronghold of his ancestors (1318) and the Sultan's plan of conquering Rajputana from the Rajputs failed.

The subjugation of Rajputana was followed by that of Malwa. This famous Hindu kingdom had hitherto been little molested by the Muslims. Iltutmish had not advanced beyond Chanderi and Balban never seriously thought of subjugating this country. Ala-ud-Din now invaded it with a view to its conquest, and despatched a strong army under his able and experienced general Ain-ul-Mulk (December 1305). Mandu, Ujjain, Dhar, Chanderi, etc. were soon compelled to accept the suzerainty of the Sultan of Delhi.

Conquest of Malwa, 1305

In the earlier years of his reign, Ala-ud-Din had to face a number of revolts engineered by the old Jalali nobles. Even though he had made them lavish gifts of money, these officers were, at heart, inimical to his interests and looked upon Ala-ud-Din as usurper.

Revolts and conspiracies

The first of this series of revolts was the one

¹The immediate cause of the invasion was the passionate desire of the Sultan to obtain possession of the beautiful Padmani the queen of the Rana of Chitor. The story of how the Rana was entrapped by the Sultan and how he was rescued by a stratagem is too wellknown to be repeated here. It may, however, be mentioned that some modern writers regard the story of Padmani as a myth. There is no mention of it in the works of contemporary writers. Firishta who wrote his book in the 16th century is, perhaps, the first among the Muslim historians who mentions the story.

brought about by Haji Maula, former Kotwal of the city of Delhi. Taking advantage of the Sultan's discomfiture at Ranthambor, Haji Maula placed upon the throne of Delhi a descendant of Iltutmish and himself usurped the entire authority in the imperial city. Ala-ud-Din had to suspend operations at Ranthambor and to hurry back to Delhi. The king's presence saved the situation and the rebels were punished. A similar attempt to seize the throne was made by Akat Khan, the son of Ala-ud-Din's brother. During a hunting expedition in the neighbourhood of Ranthambor, Akat Khan managed to waylay the Sultan, wounded him and left him for dead and himself hastened to Delhi. Still another revolt was engineered by the two sons of Ala-ud-Din's sister, namely, Umar Khan and Mangu Khan who were governors of Badaun and Oudh respectively.

In 1306, when the danger from the Mongols had vanished and various conspiracies had been suppressed and when practically the whole of Northern India had come into his hands, Ala-ud-Din's thoughts turned again to the Deccan. He sent a large army under the command of his famous slave Malik Kafur, a renegade Hindu,¹ to gather fresh spoils from the wealthy southern kingdoms.

Of the South Indian kingdoms those of Deogiri in the west, Telingana in the east and Hoysala to the south of the Krishna and Tungbhadra were the most important and also, perhaps the richest. Malik Kafur proceeded first towards Deogiri. On his way he defeated Rai Karan of Gujarat and by a fortunate accident got possession of his daughter Deval Devi, and sent her off to Delhi.² The Malik then marched to Deogiri whose ruler Ramchandra, sued for terms and asked forgiveness for his previous conduct. Kafur proved wise and tactful. He had yet to proceed farther south and did not consider it safe to leave behind a powerful foe. He therefore treated Ramchandra very kindly and not only restored his own dominions to him but added a small territory in Gujarat to his dominions.

Ruler of Deogiri submits to Malik Kafur

Kafur then crossed the river Godavari and directed his march to the kingdom of Pratab Rudra Deva Kakatiya, ruler of

¹Malik Kafur was a handsome eunuch, who had won the favour of the Sultan by his personal beauty and became his 'vile favourite.' The Sultan subsequently discovered his great qualities and created him Malik Naib and invested him with the supreme command of the royal forces.

²It happened thus: a party of about 300 soldiers of Kafur's army had gone to see the caves of Ellora when they sighted from a distance a party of Hindu horses and fell upon it in the hope of obtaining some plunder. It proved indeed to be a prize worth having, for it was the escort of the princess Deval Devi who was going on a visit to the cave temples of Ellora. The escort was soon put to flight. Deval Devi was captured and sent to Delhi, where she was given in marriage to Ala-ud-Din's son.

Telingana. After a long siege, the city and fort of Warangal were captured and the Raja purchased his safety by offering a heavy sum of money besides consenting to pay annual tribute. Kafur, with his spoils of a thousand camels, groaning under the weight of treasure returned to Delhi in March, 1310.¹

*Capture of
Warangal by
Kafur A.D.
1309-10*

The comparatively easy victory which attended the arms of the imperial army in Telingana and the immense booty brought by Malik Kafur to Delhi as the result of his South Indian campaigns whetted the Sultan's ambition for further conquests in that direction. The rich kingdoms beyond the river Krishna were still unsubdued. Ala-ud-Din, accordingly commissioned his favourite eunuch-general once again to march to South India, and Kafur left Delhi in November 1310. Proceeding with forced marches, the Malik crossed the river Krishna and turned towards Dwarasamudra, in the Karnatic. Dwarasamudra was the capital of the Hoysala or Balol kingdom which, of late, had been consolidated under its capable ruler Ballal II. The Hoysalas and the Yadavas of Deogiri and the Kakatiyas of Warangal had long been at war with each other and their mutual feuds had disabled them all and made room for a third power, namely, that of the Muslims. Vira Ballal was defeated and made prisoner and was ultimately restored to liberty on paying a heavy war indemnity. The entire Hoysala kingdom which comprised the whole of what is now the Mysore state and a portion of Konkan was overrun, plundered, and to a certain extent subjugated. The power of the Hoysalas declined after this date and the Ballal Rajputs were reduced to the position of local Rajas.

*Reduction of
Dwarasamudra*

The victorious Muslim general emboldened by these successes then penetrated to the extreme southern point of India, namely Madura, the ancient capital of the Pandya kingdom. The kingdom of the Pandyas was torn by civil war among the two brothers, Sundar Pandya and Vira Pandya. Driven out of Madura, Sundar Pandya took refuge under the protection of Malik Kafur which gave him a pretext to invade the Pandya kingdom. The Rai Vira Pandya fled on the approach of the Muslim army, leaving the royal palace, the treasure and the stables to be plundered by Kafur. The booty seized by the Muslim army consisted of 500 elephants and 5,000 horses, besides gold, silver and precious stones. Kafur is said to have built a mosque at Madura which was still in existence in the sixteenth century when Firishta wrote his history of India.

*Attack on
Madura
A.D. 1311*

¹The booty obtained by Malik Kafur was immense. Firishta's estimate of the gold that fell into the hands of the Muslims is 96,000 maunds besides other valuables and live-stock, namely, horses and elephants.

Thus, by the end of A.D. 1312. Ala-ud-Din had reached the height of his power. The ancient Rajput houses of Malwa, Chitor and Gujarat in the north and the powerful ruling dynasties of the south, namely the Yadavas, the Hoysalas, the Kakatiyas and the Pandyas were all subdued and made to acknowledge the Sultan of Delhi as their suzerain. In fact, the whole of the Indian peninsula was made to own his sway and his wealth certainly exceeded that of any prince then living.

*Extent of
the empire*

Ala-ud-Din, it appears, was not anxious to extend the actual territory of Delhi beyond manageable limits. It was with this end in view that the vanquished rulers of Deogiri, Dwarasamudra, Warangal and Madura were all permitted to retain their thrones on condition of their acceptance of the tributary position to the Sultan of Delhi. A similar arrangement was

*Beginning of
the imperial
period of the
Sultanate*

also made with the Rajput state of Mewar when the government of the country was entrusted to Rana Maldev on the recall of Prince Khizr Khan in 1311. The Sultan's object was to add to the prestige of the ruler of Delhi and to create an impression of his power on the princes of India. By this policy, Ala-ud-Din may be said to have inaugurated the era of imperial history of the Sultanate. Another result of Ala-ud-Din's expeditions was the very great amount of wealth in gold, silver and livestock which came into the hands of the Sultan of Delhi. The wealthy rulers of South India were literally fleeced of their accumulated treasures.

The declining years of Ala-ud-Din were, unfortunately, darkened by rebellion and disorder.¹ The Hindus in the Deccan and in Rajputana were not prepared to submit so easily to the

*Rebellion
and disorder*

Muslim yoke. Indeed, within the short space of three years before Ala-ud-Din's death almost all of them regained their independence. Ramchandra of Deogiri was dead, but his son withheld the tribute and proclaimed his independence. Kafur was sent back to the Deccan where he defeated Shankar Deva and put him to death; but soon after Shankar's brother-in-law, Harpal Deva, summoned the country to arms and expelled the Muhammadan garrisons. Gujarat next rose in rebellion, and the imperial troops sent there were defeated. The Rajputs of Chitor soon followed the example of Gujarat, 'threw the Muhammadan officers over the walls of the fort' and asserted their independence. 'On receiving these accounts,' says Firishta, 'the king bit his own flesh with fury.' His rage aggravated his illness and he died in January, A.D. 1316.

In the early years of his reign, Ala-ud-Din was troubled by many revolts among his nobles and relations, and he was also

¹There were revolts or rebellions in the earlier years of Ala-ud-Din's reign, too. See page 275.

exposed to the standing peril of an invasion by the Mongols. Vexed by these revolts and conspiracies, the king called together his councillors and asked them to advise him as to the causes and the cure of the evils that beset the state.

*Ala-ud-Din's
internal policy
and reforms*

He was frankly told that the causes were :

- (i) The want of a well organized system of espionage which left the Sultan ignorant of the general conditions prevailing in the country.
- (ii) The Sultan's devotion to wine and his frequent social intercourse with the nobles of the state which was calculated to undermine the prestige of the kingly office.
- (iii) Frequent intermarriages, between the families of the nobles which by fostering intimacy afforded opportunities for conspiracy.
- (iv) The abundance of wealth which intoxicated men's minds and by relieving many of them from the necessity of working for their bread, left them leisure for mischievous designs.

The king thereon applied himself vigorously to official business and passed and enforced a number of highly repressive legislative acts. He gave up the drinking of wine himself and smashed the wine cups of the palace and ordered all the wine in Delhi to be emptied into the streets. And so earnestly did the king insist on temperance that he punished drunkards by setting them in pits outside the city walls. By a royal edict it was declared unlawful for the nobles to give parties or to hold meetings in one another's houses. Even the marriage alliances between the families of the nobility without special permission of the Sultan were forbidden by this edict. Another ordinance established an army of spies and informers whose business it was to report to the government anything of importance that happened within the empire.

The Sultan next turned his attention to the unequal division of property, which was believed to be one of the causes of sedition. All the gratuities and pensions and jagirs exceeding a certain appointed limit were confiscated to the state and the grantees and other officers were left just enough for their subsistence. Special instructions were issued to the tax-collectors to extort gold on any pretext that could be devised from all who possessed it. These harsh measures naturally bred discontent and the fear of conspiracy and murder led the Sultan to the establishment of a complete system of espionage. Spies of tried loyalty were taken into the king's confidence and were required to keep him informed of all that transpired in the houses of the Maliks and Amirs.

The object of Ala-ud-Din in devising these measures to relieve the people of their superfluous wealth was not merely to curb

their spirits. He also needed money to fit out and maintain an efficient standing army against the Mongols and to put all the defences on the road to Delhi in good order. As usual with him Ala-ud-Din carried out his schemes with his characteristic thoroughness. He improved upon the frontier policy of Balban and like his predecessor he repaired all old forts and also built new ones along the Multan-Bhatinda line, the route usually followed by the Mongols. The grades of pay in the army service were revised and reduced and the number of cavalry was considerably increased.

To provide against the fraudulent practices of the military fief-holders, Ala-ud-Din introduced the practice of drawing up a minute descriptive roll of every man and horse engaged by a jagirdar at the time of the grant of his fief. Another device adopted by the Sultan to exercise effective check over the malpractices of these feudal lords of borrowing horses from one another for muster parades was the system of branding their cavalry horses.¹

The lands that had been given away as grants by former rulers, were resumed and incorporated in the imperial domains.

The assessment on cultivated fields was raised to the exorbitant proportion of one half of the produce, whereas previously it had varied from one-sixth to one-third of the gross produce. Several new taxes were levied. A grazing tax was imposed on cattle, and a house tax was also levied, the policy of the state being to extort as much as possible.

In order that there might always be an abundance of supplies at cheap rates in the markets of Delhi, the Sultan directed that the dues on crown lands should be paid in kind. Large granaries were erected for the storing of grain, and it became so plentiful that the people did not feel the pinch of high prices even in times of scarcity. Merchants and carriers of grain were registered and compelled to settle in the suburbs of Delhi, and any attempt to sell grain at a rate higher than that fixed by government was severely punished. Regulations were also issued to control the prices of such articles as cloth, sugar, ghee, oil, pulses, etc. The prices of horses, arms and other equipment which were required by the soldiers were likewise controlled. This system of control of supplies, control of transport, control of prices and the rationing of consumable articles resembles, in its essence, the system

¹This practice of descriptive rolls (*chihra nawisi*) and the branding of horses (*dagh*) were later on revived by Sher Shah and elaborated by Akbar. In Sikh times both these devices were adopted by Ranjit Singh and a large number of Descriptive rolls of the Sikh army are still preserved in the State archives of the Panjab Government. (See Catalogue of the Sikh Darbar Records, vol. II by Sita Ram Kohli.)

which was adopted on a larger scale in England during the European war of 1914-18 and which is being put into operation today in India during the present war.

The agrarian measures of the Sultan affected the Hindu zamindars and Muqqadams very severely. 'No Hindu,' writes Barani, 'could hold up his head, and in their houses no sign of gold or silver. . . . or of any superfluity was to be seen. These things which nourish insubordination and rebellion were no longer to be found.' But it is open to doubt if the politico-economical measures adopted by Ala-ud-Din were directed against the Hindus as a race. We have no historical evidence to show that there had been a general persecution of the Hindus prompted by consideration of religion.

Treatment of the Hindus

These measures succeeded well enough in the beginning. The nobles living in constant terror of the imperial spies refrained from their seditious designs. The low cost of living increased the sources of happiness of an average man and naturally bound him more closely to the personal despotism of the Sultan.

Result of these measures

But the cumulative effect of the legislative measures of the Sultan proved adverse to the stability of his house. The merchants and business men resented the interference of the government in the matter of fixing and controlling the prices of their goods. The Hindu peasantry groaned under the weight of heavy taxation and the Hindu population in general resented various humiliations inflicted upon them. The Rajput chieftains who were deprived of their independence continued to brood over their losses and awaited the opportunity to recover their freedom; and they actually did so when the Sultan was in declining health towards the close of his career. The Muslim nobility too, had their own grievance. Accustomed to a life of pleasure and gaiety, they felt irritated by the restrictions imposed upon their daily social life. Again, the elevation of base-born men like Malik Kafur and others to positions of eminence at the court was anything but acceptable to them and naturally estranged from the Sultan the sympathies of his leading nobles.

Ala-ud-Din's government was not merely military. It was also civil and secular in the sense that it was opposed to the interference of the Muslim church divinities in affairs of the state. The Sultan's political theory is clearly set forth in the words which he addressed to Qazi Mughis-ud-Din of Bayana, with whom he conferred about the legal position of the sovereign power in the state: "Although I have not studied the science or the Book, I am a Muslim of the Muslim stock. . . . I do not know whether this is lawful or unlawful. Whatever I think to be for the good of the state or suitable for the emergency, that

Ala-ud-Din's theory of kingship

I decree; and as for what may happen to me on the approaching day of judgment that I know not." This was a departure from the traditional policy of the Muslim rulers who always gave preference to the opinions of the Ulemas in matters religious as well as secular. Ala-ud-Din was the first Muslim ruler who had the courage to oppose the interference of the Doctors of Divinity in the secular affairs of the state. He held that the welfare of the country was the exclusive privilege and duty of the rulers while the religious injunctions rested on the judgments of the Qazis and the Muftis.

Ala-ud-Din's reign lasted for twenty years; (1296-1316) and in this short period he subdued the Rajput rulers of Ranthambor, Chitor, Gujarat and Malwa in the north and those of Deogiri Warangal and Dwarasamudra in the South. No king in India had ever conquered such an extensive territory before him.

Ala-ud-Din's character and achievements

In his methods of administration he was, no doubt, a typical despot but to say as Vincent Smith has said, "that he was a particularly savage tyrant with very little sense of justice" would be too severe. It would not be fair to ignore some of his great achievements. He was the first Muhammadan king who inaugurated a new imperial policy of bringing the whole country under the sway of Delhi. He endeavoured to introduce a strong, efficient and centralised administration and thus created a great historic precedent which had its conscious or unconscious effect in moulding and shaping the policy of the subsequent rulers of Delhi. Again, his device of controlling the market to adjust to his policy of taxation and reduction in the scale of the pay of the army is, indeed, one of the marvels of mediaeval statesmanship.

We are informed by Firishta, who is by no means partial to Ala-ud-Din that the increase of wealth among the people in his

Buildings and literature

reign showed itself in public and private buildings throughout the empire. Ala-ud-Din was fond of buildings and is said to have executed many magnificent works. He built a new Delhi called Siri, on the site now marked by the village of Shahpur. Additions were also made on an extensive scale to the Kutb group of sacred structures.

Though himself unlettered, Ala-ud-Din had acquired the faculty of appreciating literary merit in others; and he extended his patronage to the learned and the pious. The famous poet, Amir Khusrau, and pious men like Nizam-ud-Din Aulia adorned his court and received great attentions from the Sultan.

With the removal of the strong hand of Ala-ud-Din, the disruptive forces began to assert themselves and eventually resulted in a speedy overthrow of the quasi-military

administration set up by him. The last fifteen years of the rule of this dynasty are mainly a record of crimes and cruelties. After the king's death, Malik Kafur produced a deed, said to have been executed by the king, in which Omar, an infant son of the Sultan, was nominated successor under the regency of Kafur, and the boy was placed on the throne. Two other sons of the late Sultan were imprisoned and blinded, but the third, Mubarik Shah, fortunately escaped the grasp of this tyrant. It is believed that Kafur was also trying to compass the death of his ward when he was himself removed by an assassin. Mubarik Shah then ascended the throne setting aside his younger brother Omar, whom he subsequently caused to be blinded and imprisoned. He also took the beautiful Deval Devi, his brother Khizr Khan's widow, to his own harem.

*Sultan Kutb-
ud-Din
Mubarik
1316-18.*

Mubarik was a youth of seventeen and his first measures were beneficial and just. As many as 17,000 prisoners were released and various restrictions upon trade and agriculture which had been imposed by his father were removed by him. He also showed a good deal of energy in bringing to subjection several refractory chiefs. His officers tightened their hold on Gujarat and he in person led an army into the Deccan against Deogiri, where Raja Harpal Deva had revolted. Harpal Deva failed to offer substantial resistance and was defeated, captured and put to death in A.D. 1318.

*Invasion of
Deogiri*

On his return to the capital, Mubarik soon gave himself up to dissipation. He was infatuated with a vile favourite named Hassan, a low-caste boy from Gujarat, who had nominally accepted Islam, and to whom he gave the name of Khusrau Khan. 'During his reign of four years and four months, the Sultan attended to nothing but drinking, listening to music, debauchery and pleasure, scattering gifts and gratifying his lust.' It was a sort of reaction against the late Sultan's reign.

*Mubarik
murdered by
Khusrau*

A carnival of pleasure and riot similar to that which had disgraced the reign of Kaikubad, succeeded the severe and rigid administration of Ala-ud-Din.

Malik Kafur and Khusrau represent a class or group of Hindu converts who had won their way to distinguished posts in the state. Some of them, indeed, possessed courage, ability and resource. The politics of Delhi had, at the time, fallen to the lowest ebb and had opened a vast field for ambitious and enterprising men. Malik Kafur had played the part of king-maker and Khusrau, in his turn, made an open bid for the throne of Delhi. But want of tact and moderation cost him both his life and the throne. Every one who had a pre-

*Attempt of
convert Hindus
to seize the
throne*

tention of relationship with the late king was put to death; and the palace was filled with the Parwaris viz. men of his own caste to the exclusion of the Muslim servants of the state. This was an alarming situation and the Muslim nobility who apprehended a serious danger to their political power now closed their ranks and invited Ghazi Malik from the Panjab to come to their rescue. In company with other chiefs, Ghazi Malik marched upon the capital, killed Malik Khusrau and founded a new dynasty, and put an end to the reign of terror. The deliverer was hailed from all quarters and received the congratulations of the assembled nobles who offered him the keys of the palace and did him homage.

NOTES

The Khiljis came to power by overthrowing the Ilbari Turks and retained the throne of Delhi for 28 years. They had to their credit military exploits in Bihar and Bengal and also in the north-western provinces where they had been successful in checking the Mongol invasions. Their leader, at the time, was Jalal-ud-Din, the muster-master of the imperial forces. But the most important and successful ruler of this dynasty was Ala-ud-Din. His achievements are, indeed, great. He made the Muslim power more stable in the country.

- (a) The conquest and subjugation of the Rajput kingdoms of Mewar, Malwa and Gujarat almost entirely mitigated the danger to which the Sultanate of Delhi was exposed on its south and south-western flanks.
- (b) The conquest and subjugation of the Deccan kingdoms ushered an era of imperialism in the history of the Sultanate.
- (c) The abolition of the baronial or feudal system of administration led to the centralization of authority in the hands of the Sultan of Delhi and mitigated the dangers of the abuse of authority by the Turk and the Afghan barons.
- (d) Ala-ud-Din expounded the theory that the king was responsible for the good government of the country and as such he should not be bound by the verdict of the Muslim Ulemas. This may be taken to be the beginning of the process of secularization of the state in India. The period of the Khalji rule is, therefore important in the mediaeval history of India both for the territorial expansion of the empire as well as for the beginning of new ideology in administrative principles.

QUESTIONS

1. Give an account of the expansion of the political power of the Delhi Sultanate in the Deccan and Southern India under Ala-ud-Din Khalji. Also explain why he did not annex the South Indian kingdoms which he had conquered.
2. Give, in outline, the administrative and economic reforms of Ala-ud-Din. Explain his conception of the powers and privileges of a king and say in what respect these were different from the political ideas of his predecessors.
3. Draw a map of India to illustrate the conquests of Ala-ud-Din Khalji. Explain why his empire collapsed during his life time.

SULTANS OF KHALJI DYNASTY

Serial No.	NAME.	Date, A.D.	REMARKS
1	Jalal-ud-Din ..	1290-96	Full official title Jalal-ud-Din, Firuz Shah. Murdered by his nephew Ala-ud-Din.
2	Ala-ud-Din ..	1296-1316	The first Sultan of Delhi who extended his empire over the whole peninsula: defeated and subdued the ruling houses of Malwa, Gujarat, Chitor and Ranthambor in the north and those of Deogiri, Warangal and Dwarasamudra and Madura in the south. Defeated and treated mercilessly the Mongol invaders and took effective measures to safeguard his frontiers. In administration, too, he believed in centralising his authority, kept State and Church apart; introduced measures to restrict the power of his nobles and levied additional taxes on the peasantry to keep them in bondage, and regulated market prices to keep the men in the street satisfied, happy and contented. Died a natural death.
3	Shahab-ud-Din (Omar Khan) ..	Jan. 1315- Feb. 1315.	Fourth son of Ala-ud-Din from Hindu mother. Placed on the throne by Malik Kafur. Deposed, blinded and imprisoned by his elder brother Mubarik.
4	Kutb-ud-Din Mubarik. ..	1315-18	Third son of Ala-ud-Din. Full official title Kutb-ud-Din Mubarik. Murdered by his favourite Malik Khusrau.
5	Khusrau Shah ..	1318-20	Original name Hassan—was a low caste Hindu convert; became a vile favourite of Mubarik; killed his master and usurped the throne. Filled the ranks of service by men of his own low caste to the exclusion of the Muslim nobility. Was deposed and killed by Ghiyas-ud-Din Tughlak.

CHAPTER XVIII

Tughlak Dynasty A.D. 1320—1412

The revolution brought about by Ghazi Malik Tughlak resembles the one brought about by Jalal-ud-Din Firuz Khalji thirty years before. "Tughlak and Firuz Khalji were both," as Sir Wolsley Haig observes, "aged warriors called upon to restore the dominions of Islam, menaced by the extinction of the dynasties which they had long served."

*Ghiyas-ud-Din
Tughlak
A.D. 1320-25*

Ghazi Malik now assumed the title of Ghiyas-ud-Din Tughlak and founded a new line of rulers of Delhi named after him as the Tughlak dynasty. He was a man of humble origin, the son of a Turkish slave of Sultan Balban by a Hindu mother. In course of time he rose to a high position and, under Ala-ud-Din Khalji, won merited distinction during the wars against the Mongols. He was eventually appointed governor of Dipalpur and successfully managed that important frontier province which, under previous governors, had always been exposed to the raids of the Mongols.

Ghiyas-ud-Din proved to be a capable ruler and justified the confidence bestowed on him by his colleagues. Order was soon restored in northern India and his personal experience of the administration of the Panjab soon enabled the Sultan to place his western frontier in a state of perfect defence against the Mongol invaders. Revolts in the Deccan and disturbances in Bengal occupied him thereafter until his death in 1325.

After the death of Khusrau Khan, the Hindu rajas of Deogiri and Warangal had again revolted and the king despatched his eldest son Juna Khan into the Deccan to restore order. Deogiri was easily made to submit but Pratapa Rudra Deva, ruler of Telingana offered opposition. The strong stone walls of the city of

*Expeditions
against Deogiri
and Warangal*

Warangal resisted all efforts of the Imperial army and during the siege a malignant epidemic broke out which decimated the ranks of the Delhi army. The people of Warangal had also interrupted the postal service of the imperial army, so that for some time Juna Khan received no news from Delhi, and began to suspect that his father had passed away. He therefore hastily raised the siege and retired from the Deccan. The retreating Muslim army was pursued by the Hindus with great slaughter and Prince Juna returned to Delhi with only a small remnant of his large force.

The first expedition to Warangal thus ended in failure, but the second was more successful. Within few months of his first disaster, the prince succeeded in persuading his father to permit him to undertake another expedition. He organised a new force and with it proceeded to the south to redeem his honour. He conquered Bidar, or Vidarbha and then reduced Warangal. Pratapa Rudra and his family were sent to Delhi and Muhammadan officers were appointed to govern the country. The whole of the Telugu country was thus brought under Muhammadan administration and the rule of the Kakatiya Rajputs in that country ended in A.D. 1323.

Ghiyas-ud-Din himself went to Bengal. This great eastern province had remained unaffected by the revolutions in the centre of the empire and the descendants of Bughra Khan, the son of Sultan Balban, had continued to rule as virtual kings through all these changes at Delhi for more than forty years. Bahadur, the eldest of Bughra's grandsons, was now deposed by one of his cousins and Bengal was threatened by a civil war; but the timely intervention of the Tughlak Sultan saved the situation. Nasir-ud-Din, another grandson of Bughra Khan, was entrusted with the government and allowed to assume the ensigns of royalty provided he maintained good relations with Delhi. On his way back Ghiyas-ud-Din reduced the petty Hindu state of Tirhut.

*Disturbance in
Bengal 1324-25*

The Sultan returned to Delhi in February, 1325, and his son Juna Khan, who was in charge of the capital during the absence of his father, had prepared a wooden pavilion for his reception on the bank of the Jumna. The morning and afternoon were passed in great festivities, races and parades of horses and elephants. At the conclusion of the entertainments, the king took up his station in the new building for afternoon prayers, when, as a result of a collision with the passing elephants, the timber structure fell on the Sultan and his favourite younger son, Mahmud, who had accompanied him. Both father and son were buried beneath the ruins and crushed to death. It was suspected that this was more than an accident.

*Death of
Ghiyas-ud-Din
A.D. 1325*

Although Ghiyas-ud-Din occupied the throne for a brief period of five years, yet he did a good deal in purifying and cleansing up the administration which had been rendered foul and filthy during the reign of the 'profligate Mubarik' and the 'unclean Khusrau.' He dismissed the whole gang of the Parwaris with whom the king's household and other high offices were filled and recovered from them most of the public money which the usurper Khusrau had lavished upon them. The jagirs which were conferred, during the previous administrations, upon the undeserving favourites were also resumed.

*Administration
of
Ghiyas-ud-Din*

Some of the stringent trade regulations which still persisted since the days of Ala-ud-Din were abolished and the tax on land was also reduced to encourage agriculture. It was not only the finances of the State which were set in order but the departments of justice and police were also considerably improved by Ghiyas-ud-Din. Ibn Batuta tells us that by the order of the Sultan there was also established a regular system of *dak chauki* and the post was transmitted by mounted messengers. Thus, in a short time, Ghiyas-ud-Din was able to restore, once again, order and security in all parts of the empire. ✓

Juna now became king with the title of Muhammad-bin-Tughlak. We are told by contemporary historians¹ that he was one of the most accomplished men of his age. He was proud of his elegant writing and his letters were models of style and composition. He had studied all the sciences of the period,

*Muhammad
Tughlak—his
character and
attainments
A.D. 1325-51*

especially mathematics and medicine, and used 'to attend patients himself and note down the progress of their complaints.' He had read logic and Greek philosophy and was fond of metaphysical discussions with the learned men in his empire. According to his

own notions of godliness he was, perhaps, pious of the pious. He never neglected his religious duties, omitted no prayers and abstained from all vices forbidden in the Koran. Firishta's observation that 'with all these qualities he was devoid of the divine quality of mercy, or of consideration for his subjects' seems rather severe and unmerited. His whole life, no doubt, was spent in pursuing unrealizable schemes and they did bring about unforeseen sufferings to his subjects; but the charge of deliberate cruelty cannot justly be levelled against the Sultan.

Since there was some suspicion regarding his conduct towards his father, Muhammad Tughlak had to secure the favour

*Bestowal of
lavish gifts on
army and
nobility*

of his army and nobility by lavish largesse scattering without stint the hoarded treasures of the earlier sovereigns. He is reported to have expended 'on one day more than £500,000 sterling.'

Under the rule of the Tughlaks a manifest change took place in the imperial policy of the Sultans of Delhi. Ala-ud-Din

*Change in the
Imperial policy*

Khalji, as we have observed before, subdued the Hindu states of the south but had left them in the actual possession of their rulers provided they

acknowledged him as their overlord and paid tribute. The Tughlaks, on the other hand, dispossessed the subdued Rajas of their ancestral domains and appointed Muhammadan

¹Our knowledge of the reign of Muhammad Tughlak is extraordinarily detailed and accurate because in addition to the narrative of Zia-ud-Din Barani, we possess the observations of the African traveller, Ibn Batuta, who lived at the court of the Sultan for several years.

governors over the conquered territory. Thus the ancient ruling houses of Deogiri and Warangal were superseded by governors appointed from Delhi.

It was, in fact, in furtherance of this policy of consolidating the authority of Delhi over the countries beyond the Narbada, that Muhammad Tughlak was led to remove his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad. The empire was spreading southwards beyond the Narbada and the Vindhya ranges; and the inconvenience of governing the southern provinces effectively from the distant capital at Delhi was being felt by the Sultans. The situation in the Deccan was further aggravated in the beginning of Muhammad Tughlak's reign and called for prompt action on his part. The Sultan's cousin, Gurshasp, raised the standard of revolt in the district of Sagar (Deccan) where he was sent as governor by his uncle, the late Ghiyas-ud-Din Tughlak. Gurshasp was defeated but escaped to the neighbouring Hindu kingdom of Kampli whose ruler refused to hand over the refugee to the Sultan. Muhammad Tughlak was then convinced of the desirability of a more central place than Delhi for his capital; and in 1327 he decreed that the capital should be transferred to Deogiri—the old seat of the Yadava rulers. The city was renamed Daulatabad or 'the empire city.' Palaces and mosques were built on an extensive scale in the new capital and the city was fortified 'with three lines of walls and ditches.' A mint was also established there and, to commemorate the event, a gold coin was struck at Deogiri in 1326-27. The people of Delhi were given facilities to sell their property to the State to enable them to build new houses in Daulatabad with the proceeds. All sorts of transport facilities were provided for the long journey; a road at an enormous cost was built from Delhi to Daulatabad and food and accommodation was supplied on the way to the emigrants. Delhi, according to Ibn Batuta, was literally deserted and turned into a solitude.¹

Removal of capital from Delhi to Daulatabad

No sooner was the capital transferred to Daulatabad than several provincial governors in the North ceased to send their regular tribute to the royal treasury, and, the governor of Multan, taking advantage of his comparative remoteness from the new capital, broke into open revolt. The Mongols, who were always ready for a fray, were also tempted by these disturbances to descend once again on the plains of the

Failure of the Scheme; its causes

¹The story is told by Ibn Batuta that a search having been made in the deserted 'city the royal slaves found two men in the streets, one paralysed, and the other blind.' They were brought 'before the Sovereign, who ordered the paralytic to be shot dead and the blind man to be dragged from Delhi to Daulatabad.' This statement of Ibn Batuta sounds more like bazar gossip than a fact of history. Batuta came much later than this occurrence and probably recorded what he only heard from the people.

Panjab. Early in A.D. 1327, Tarmashirin, the brave leader of the Chaghatai tribe of the Mongols, subdued Multan and the surrounding country and advanced, with a considerable force, as far as Delhi, having on his way devastated almost the whole of Sirhind. The Emperor was compelled to quit his new capital and marched out to oppose their advance but, finding himself unable to do so, bought off the invaders by the payment of a vast sum of money. But this act of the Sultan, as was proved in the sequel, only stimulated the Mongols to renewed invasions. He was then obliged to remain for three years at Delhi in order to guard against a repetition of the invasion. The scheme of the Sultan to transfer his capital thus failed. It is open to doubt that it should have succeeded in any case. The northern frontiers both in the east and west were situated at a long distance from Daulatabad and needed constant watch and vigilance. The Mongol inroads were a standing menace to the safety of the northern provinces. The Rajput rulers of Mewar, Malwa and Gujarat were only partially subdued and were smarting under the yoke of the Sultan. Nor were the Rajput kingdoms of the Deccan reconciled to the rule of Delhi. In the case of revolts in northern India it would have been extremely difficult for the Sultan to face the situation from his new capital which itself was situated in the midst of hostile population.

Among his other ambitious ideas Muhammad Tughlak cherished the desire of conquering Persia. He was probably induced to do this by a few Khorasani nobles who had sought refuge at the court early in his reign. Accordingly, a vast army numbering about 3,70,000 cavalry was assembled to conquer the Persian province of Khorasan, but the pay of the troops falling into arrears, they dispersed and pillaged the districts they passed through on their way back to their homes.

Another equally disastrous project was the sending of an expedition against a hill chieftain in the Himalayas. An army of 100,000 horse and foot was despatched, under Khusrau Malik into the mountains by way of Kangra which it captured, and then advanced into the territory of a hill chieftain. But, as ill-luck would have it, the imperial troops were overtaken by heavy rains in the mountains and began to retire. The enemy taking advantage of the situation pursued the retreating royal army through the difficult mountain defiles and destroyed it almost to a man. The few who survived to return to Delhi were massacred by their blood-thirsty master.¹

¹The expedition is wrongly represented by Firishta as an attempt to conquer China or Tibet. Later historians following the lead of Firishta have made the same mistake. Barani and Ibn Batuta, the two contemporary writers, have clearly stated that the expedition was directed against a hill state situated at a distance of 10 stages from Delhi.

Such mad and expensive plans of the Sultan naturally disordered the finances of the state. The treasury had been emptied of the wealth accumulated by Ala-ud-Din and his successors. In order, therefore, to replenish his treasury and to meet the heavy drain upon his finances, Muhammad Tughlak made his famous experiment of a token currency. The Sultan, perhaps, argued that if the emperor of China or a Khan of Persia¹ could issue paper money with success he could pass copper as if it were silver in virtue of his royal command. Accordingly he issued orders to that effect and struck vast quantities of copper coins at a high nominal value.² These were inscribed with legends denoting their value and were meant to take the place of the silver *tankas*. But their acceptance depended upon the credit of the public treasury and the foreign merchants refused the coins at their imaginary value. If the supply had been restricted, perhaps, things might have gone well, and the copper coins would have circulated at the face value put upon them by the government. But it was impossible in those days to prevent illicit coinage; there was no milling or other device to distinguish the issues of the royal mint from private forgeries. Any skilled engraver could copy the inscriptions and strike copper tokens of equal value on his own behalf. The result was natural. Every house became a mint, and the people began to pay their dues to the royal treasury with these and 'with these they purchased horses, arms and fine things of all kinds.' In the three years during which these coins were current, the treasury was filled with copper coins and the Sultan was obliged to recall the currency and to pay gold and silver for the copper coins brought back into the mint.

Financial difficulties of the Sultan

These pecuniary difficulties led the Sultan to raise the tax on land and also to levy very heavy duties on the necessities of life. To add to the misery, as it were, these taxes were collected with such rigour that the people, especially of the Doab between the Ganges and the Jumna, who were too poor to pay the taxes, were driven to rebellion, and farmers were compelled to leave their homes and lands and to retire to the jungles to live by plunder. But this only served to incense the Sultan who 'drove them out of the woods in which they had taken refuge, massacred them without mercy, and hung thousands of their heads over the city walls of Delhi. A failure of the rains for several years in succession, completed the mischief which had been wrought by man and the country round Delhi was converted into a desert. The

Heavy taxation and famine result in the desolation of the Doab

¹ Kubla Khan in China and a Mongol Khan of Persia had recently endeavoured to introduce paper money.

²This forced currency bears the dates A.H. 730-732 (A.D. 1329-32).—V. Smith, P. 241.

famine lasted for several years and it is only fair to the Sultan to admit that he did his best to mitigate the distress caused by famine and excessive taxation. He abolished all taxes beyond the legal alms and the government tithes and himself sat twice a week to receive the complaints of the oppressed. He distributed food daily to all the people of Delhi for six months in a time of scarcity and organized an excellent system of government loans to agriculturists which would have been of great service but for the dishonesty of the overseers.¹

But the harm which had been done was beyond repair. His innovations and costly experiments had harassed and annoyed the people and made the Sultan unpopular. His *The Sultan becomes unpopular* It was little wonder that revolts were frequent. The spirit of discontent was everywhere rife and rebellion was suppressed in one quarter only to break out afresh in another. We hear of revolts in Multan, in Bengal, in Malabar, at Lahore, again in Multan, then at Samana and at Warangal and next near Oudh, at Karra and in Bidar, at Deogiri and in Gujarat. Though the Sultan was usually successful in suppressing these insurrections he could not be everywhere at the same time with the result that piece by piece the great empire dropped away.

Muhammad Tughlak was very much dismayed by this general insurrection and thought of invoking the help of the Khalifa, the head of Islam. Accordingly, an embassy was *Embassy to Egypt* sent to Egypt to obtain the sanction of the Abbasid Khalifa of Cairo to his title as orthodox king of India. The embassy was honoured by the Khalifa, who in return despatched one of his representatives to confer the diploma of investiture on the Sultan of Delhi who now professed himself to be merely the vicerent of the Khalifa and 'removed his own name from the Khutba and the coins and replaced it by that of the supreme ruler of Islam.'

Muhammad Tughlak's liberal education and his closer association with philosophers and scholars of his times had widened his outlook in matters secular and spiritual. He *Liberal principles of Administration* employed deserving Hindus in some of the high positions in the state and by persuasion and legislation tried to stop the inhuman practice of *sati*. He upheld Ala-ud-Din Khalji's theory that the administration of justice was not the monopoly of the Ulemas but anyone who was competent to expound the law could be appointed as a judge. Acting on this principle the Sultan often invested the distinguished officers of the state with judicial powers even

¹ Stanley Lane Poole, *Mediaeval India*, P. 133.

though they were not Muftis or Qazis. The traveller Ibn Batuta was appointed as the chief Qazi in Delhi and remained on this post for several years. The Sultan made himself the Supreme Court of Appeal, and when his judgment differed from that of the Muftis, he overruled them and adhered to his own view. Like Ala-ud-Din, he would not like to be circumscribed by the ruling of the canonists in regard to the financial policy of the state. He levied several taxes in addition to the four legal ones prescribed by the Quran and also continued to appropriate four-fifths of the share of plunder for himself, leaving only one-fifth for his soldiers. Ibn Batuta¹ speaking about Muhammad Tughlak's love of justice says that 'of all men the king is the most humble, and of all men, he most loves justice.'

Muhammad Tughlak's notion of kingship was almost identical with that of Balban and Ala-ud-Din Khalji. Like Balban he believed that the "Sultan is the shadow of God" and "he who obeys him truly obeys God."² Like Ala-ud-Din he believed that the welfare of the people was the concern of royalty and that if the decisions of the jurists were in conflict with those of the Sultan, he may not accept them.

His notion of Kingship

A contemporary writer, Siraj-ud-Din (quoted by Thomas in his *Chronicles of Pathan Kings*), gives a list of twenty-three provinces subject to the Sultan of Delhi. It was an empire far larger than that under the rule of any of Muhammad Tughlak's Muhammadan predecessors; nor, perhaps did a king of Delhi hold so wide a dominion again till the time of Aurangzeb. The empire roughly comprised the countries now known as the Panjab, the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Bihar, Tirhut, Bengal, Sind, Malwa, Gujarat and a large portion of the Deccan, including part of Mysore and the Coromandal coast. But, as ill-luck would have it, this vast empire soon began to crumble and some of the big provinces like Sind, Bengal and the Deccan were torn away from it during the very life time of the Sultan.

Extent of the Empire

The earliest rebellion of importance was that of Ahsan Shah, governor of Malabar. Taking advantage of the preoccupations

¹Ibn Abdul Muhammad, commonly known as Ibn Batuta, was a native of Morocco. He came to Delhi in A.D. 1333 after having made an extensive tour in Egypt, Palestine, Arabia and Persia. He was a great theologian and jurist and on his arrival in Delhi, Muhammad Tughlak conferred upon him the office of the chief qazi of the state. Batuta had thus an excellent opportunity of making personal observations of the court and its daily working which he has recorded in his itinerary. In 1342, the Emperor sent him to China on a diplomatic mission from where he returned to his own country. His account of India is interesting and on the whole accurate and truthful.

²These and other expressions like "God is the supporter of the Sultan," were inscribed on his coins by Muhammad Tughlak.

of the Sultan in Delhi, Ahsan raised the standard of revolt at Madura and assumed the royal title. *Ahsan Shah's revolt* A.D. 1335 Muhammad Tughlak marched against him by way of Daulatabad and Warangal, but at Warangal, a pestilence broke out in the army and carried away large numbers. The Sultan was obliged to abandon the expedition and Ahsan Shah was allowed to retain his independence. The successors of Ahsan Shah were eventually overthrown by the rulers of Vijayanagar in 1377.

On the death of the governor of eastern Bengal in 1338, one of his officers named Qadar Khan assumed independence. *Revolt of Bengal* Muhammad Tughlak was too busy with troubles in other parts of his wide empire to attend to this upstart rebel with the result that Bengal was severed from the dominions of Delhi.

Ain-ul-Mulk, governor of Oudh had ruled that province with justice and clemency. It was he who had rendered invaluable service to the Sultan when the royal court was removed from Delhi to Swargdwari (Farrukhabad) on account of famine. He was seriously perturbed when he received his orders of transfer to the government of the Deccan and went in revolt. *Revolt of Ain-ul-Mulk* 1340-41 After a prolonged and stubborn fight, Ain-ul-Mulk was defeated, captured and brought before the Sultan. His associates were executed but he himself was kept in confinement for some time and later reinstated in service as superintendent of the royal gardens.

Malik Shahu, a Lodi Afghan, next rose at Multan, slew the governor, and seized the city, but fled beyond the Indus on learning that the Sultan was marching against him. *Revolt in Multan* 1342

In the provinces of Gujarat, Malwa and the Deccan the trouble arose from the Amirs of the Hundred or the Centurians. These men had originally come from the ranks of the Mongol armies and were allowed to settle in the land in the time of the Khalji Sultans. In course of time these foreigners were also permitted to take up service under the government and many of them were occupying posts of trust and responsibility in the reign of Muhammad Tughlak. As the Sultan suspected them to be originators of every trouble, he decided to deprive them of their posts. Accordingly, he appointed one Aziz Khammar as the chief revenue officer for the provinces of Malwa, Gujarat and the Deccan and curtailed the powers and prerogatives of these Centurians. Aziz Khammar, too, was a low-born, unscrupulous adventurer. Immediately on taking charge of his appointment, he summoned about ninety centurians to his court and had them executed. The Sultan connived at

Troubles in Gujarat and Deccan

the crime of Aziz. This atrocious act produced a feeling of consternation among the Amirs and they took up arms in self-defence. Disorder rapidly spread in Malwa, Gujarat and the Deccan. The Sultan marched in person to Gujarat where the rebellious centurians had seized a large treasure which was bound for Delhi. The defeated Amirs now fled towards the Deccan, and captured the city of Daulatabad and made its governor, Nizam-ud-Din, a prisoner. Malik Ismail Makh, one of their leaders was elected as king and they now proceeded to subdue the whole of the Marhatha country. When the Sultan received the intelligence of these developments, he left Gujarat for Daulatabad and defeated the rebels in an open engagement. Malik Makh fled to Deogiri and shut himself in the fort there and another Amir leader, Hassan Gangu, marched towards Gulbarga and seized the town and fort of Gulbarga. The Sultan was thus baffled in his attempt to seize the person of the leaders of the centurians. It was at Daulatabad that the Sultan received news of another serious rising in Gujarat, under the leadership of one Taghi, a man of humble origin. Leaving a force under his general Imad-ul-Mulk Sartez to deal with the centurian rebels in Maharashtra the Sultan marched back into Gujarat and was engaged, for more than three years in pursuing the elusive Taghi. In the meantime, the centurians in the Deccan had defeated Sartez and had chosen Hassan Gangu as their king, Ismail Makh having voluntarily and gladly resigned in favour of the former. It was this Hassan Gangu who subsequently founded the Bahmani kingdom in 1347.

The rebel leader Taghi eluding the grasp of the Sultan had fled into Sind. His pursuit was, however, delayed owing to the illness of the Sultan. In the autumn of 1350 when the Sultan regained his health, the march to Sind was resumed. But the Sultan had hardly reached Thatta when he again fell sick and died on March 20, 1351; and as Badauni puts it "the king was freed of his people, and they of their king."

*March on
Sind and the
death of the
Sultan*

More than half of Muhammad Tughlak's period of rule was occupied in putting down revolts which broke out in one or another part of his empire. This was partly due to the natural defects of his temper and partly to the circumstances over which he had no control. The empire had been growing unwieldy since the days of the Khaljis, and the Tughlaks made the matters worse by removing the feudatory Hindu Rajas from their respective jurisdictions and appointing Muhammadan governors in their places. Nor was the task of selecting capable and trustworthy officers for divisional or provincial posts so easy. There prevailed mutual distrust among the Turkish, the Khalji and the Tughlak nobility. Under the

*Estimate of
Muhammad
Tughlak*

circumstances many foreign adventurers of doubtful credentials found their way to high government posts. Muhammad Tughlak had, thus, the misfortune of being served by officers whose loyalty was doubtful and who were ready to aid, aggravate or even openly join a rising projected against the king. The foreign Amirs in the Deccan and the Afghan adventurers in Gujarat, Multan and other places behaved most disloyally towards the Sultan.

The Sultan's passion for originality and his love of experiments were no less responsible for bringing troubles upon himself and sufferings to his subjects. The transfer of the capital, the experiment of token currency and the too ambitious, rather mad, schemes of conquest had not only drained the government treasury but also entailed real hardship to the people. To the mischief caused by the visionary schemes of the Sultan was added the distress brought about by a prolonged famine. The cumulative effect of these troubles was that the Sultan became very unpopular with his subjects even though he had done his utmost to allay their distress during the days of the famine.

Muhammad Tughlak's punishments were, no doubt, severe but to say that he was fond of deliberate cruelty is wrong. The contemporary works of Barani and Batuta contain nothing to show that he was either mad or a blood-thirsty monarch. Rather he was gifted with a quick mind and possessed abundant energy and all that we can say is that both these gifts of nature were wrongly used by the Sultan. His so called visionary schemes were the outcome of these gifts and it was their failure alone which have earned the odium for him.

It is not certain whether Muhammad Tughlak left any male offspring, but, as soon as the news of his death was received at

Delhi, the influential courtiers, 'placed a boy of six years on the throne and he was locally acknowledged as king.' But the army which was camped on the banks of the Indus and which, now assailed by Sind rebels and Mongol

banditti, was left in a perilous plight by the sudden death of the Sultan, elected Muhammad Tughlak's cousin Firuz Shah as their sovereign.¹ Firuz though unwilling to accept the responsibility of government in the beginning was at last prevailed upon to do so; and was 'enthroned in the camp on March 23, 1351.' Order having now been restored by the appearance of a leader, the imperial army pursued and defeated the rebels and

¹Firuz Tughlak's father, Sipah Salar Rajab, was younger brother of Sultan Ghiyas-ud-Din Tughlak. His mother was a Rajput lady, daughter of Ran Mal Bhatt, ruler of Abohar, Ghiyas-ud-Din Tughlak's mother was also Hindu. Shahab-ud-Din Khalji, the infant son of Ala-ud-Din who was made to succeed his father was also of a Hindu mother. These instances show that maternal connections, at least, offered no bar to kingship even in the earlier days of the Muslim rule in India.

the new Sultan resumed his march towards Delhi. On his arrival there, the pretensions of the boy who had been set up on the throne were withdrawn, and Khwaja Jahan, the aged governor of Delhi, who was chiefly responsible for putting forward this pretender, was banished to the fief of Samana.

Firuz Tughlak's long reign of thirty-seven years was marked by general peace and prosperity. He is known to posterity not as a great soldier but as an administrator and builder of works of public utility. He appears to have realized that to rule a limited dominion well was better than to hanker after a vast and unmanageable empire. The troubles experienced by his predecessor owing to the vast extent of his territory were too fresh to be ignored. Firuz, accordingly, made no serious attempt to regain the lost possessions of the sultanate in the south. In northern India, however, the Sultan was obliged to wage a few wars to re-establish his power and prestige.

*Firuz
Tughlak's
policy*

In the very next year after his accession (A.D. 1353) Firuz marched against Haji Ilyas Shah, ruler of Bengal who had invaded the small state of Tirhut—a tributary of Delhi. On the approach of the imperial troops, Ilyas took up a position in his island fortress of Ikhdala. The weather was unfavourable and owing to heavy rains and floods in the Brahmaputra, the Delhi army could not maintain the siege. The Sultan and his army accordingly retired leaving Ilyas Shah master of the situation. The official historian has tried to explain away this unsuccessful retreat of Firuz Shah by saying that the merciful nature of the Sultan forbade him to push the siege further. He writes, "To storm the fort, put more Muslims to the sword, and expose honourable women to ignominy would be a crime for which he could not answer on the day of judgment, and which would leave no difference between him and the Mongols." The war was renewed after seven years. Ilyas died in 1357 and was succeeded by his son Sikandar Shah. The new ruler could not get on amicably with his neighbouring ruler Fakhr-ud-Din Mubarik Shah of eastern Bengal. Mubarik sought the intervention of Delhi through his son-in-law, Zaffar Khan. Sultan Firuz Tughlak despatched a huge force of 70,000 horses and 500 elephants against Sikandar Shah, but the result, even this time, was no better than the one in the previous war. After some fighting, terms of peace were arranged and the Sultan recognised the independence of the province on the condition that Sikandar Shah would continue to pay a nominal tribute to Delhi every year and that he would restore eastern Bengal to Zaffar Khan. But Zaffar Khan did not avail this offer and preferred to remain at Delhi and Sikandar Shah was left in independent possession of the kingdom of Bengal.

*Expeditions
to Bengal*

On his return from Bengal (1360) Firuz led an expedition into

Jajnagar (modern Orissa). The Brahmin ruler of Jajnagar fled into Telingana at the approach of the royal army leaving his kingdom to be plundered and devastated by the enemy. The bigoted Sultan then proceeded to Puri and desecrated the famous Hindu temple of Jagannath and threw its idols into the sea. Firuz had no mind to make Orissa a part of his empire and after accepting the submission of the Rai of Jajnagar the Sultan retired to Delhi.

The kingdom of Kangra was conquered by Muhammad Tughlak in A.D. 1337-38 but at a later date the Hindus recovered their independence and seized the strong fortress of Nagarkot by expelling its Muhammadan garrison. Firuz Tughlak now undertook the conquest of Kangra, and marched against the temple of Jwala Mukhi whose wealth and sanctity had excited the cupidity and bigotry of the Sultan. The shrine was desecrated and its rich library was seized. But the fort of Nagarkot held out for more than six months against the besiegers, when at the end of this period the Sultan lost his patience, suspended further operations and accepted the nominal submission of the Raja of Kangra.

In 1362, Firuz Tughlak took up the quarrel with the rulers of Thatta which his predecessor, Muhammad Tughlak, had been unable to settle. A large army comprising about 90,000 cavalry and 500 elephants was ordered to move to the Indus and lay siege to the fortress of the Jam. The result was disastrous. The ruler of Thatta had ordered the crops to be reaped and stored in the city which he now resolutely defended. The imperial army consequently failed to get supplies and their ranks were decimated by famine and hunger and disease. The Sultan was compelled to retire by way of Gujarat where he lost his way in the marshes of the Rann of Kachh and suffered heavy privations. He swore vengeance on the Jam and as soon as he emerged into Gujarat with the remnant of his army, he sent for reinforcements from Delhi, and after refitting his troops, started again for Thatta. His soldiers now seized the standing crops and it was the turn of the Jam to suffer from famine. The Jam held out as long as his stores lasted, but eventually he surrendered and accompanied the Sultan to Delhi where he was permitted to live as a political prisoner. The country of the Sumera Rajputs was not annexed, but a relative of the Jam was allowed to rule at Thatta 'so that the government of Delhi failed to secure any substantial benefit from two costly campaigns and a final nominal success.'

Firuz made no attempt to recover the Deccan and Hassan

Gangu, the rebellious governor of the province, was allowed to extend his conquests and to consolidate them into a powerful kingdom known as the Bahmani kingdom. *Beginning of Bahmani Kingdom*

As has been remarked above, the long reign of Firuz Tughlak has been rendered memorable by his activity in founding new towns, constructing buildings, and undertaking works of public utility. The year 1354 witnessed the founding of a new city adjoining Delhi which was named Firuzabad and which included the site of Indraprastha, famous in Hindu legends. To add to the dignity of the new town and to clothe it with antiquity, the two inscribed columns of Asoka now standing near Delhi were brought there by the order of the Sultan, the one from Topra in the Ambala district, and the other from Meerut. The two other cities founded by the Sultan were the cities of Hissar Firuza—now known as Hissar—to the north-west of Delhi, and of Jaunpur, north-west of Benares, which was named after his cousin Juna, the late Muhammad Tughlak. *Towns and cities founded by Firuz Shah*

Zia-ud-Din Barani, the contemporary historian and friend of the Sultan, gives a long list of the works of public utility executed during his reign of thirty seven years. Among the most important of these may be mentioned '50 dams across rivers to promote irrigation, 40 mosques, 30 colleges with mosques attached, 20 palaces, 100 caravan serais, 200 towns, 30 reservoirs or lakes for irrigation, 100 hospitals, 5 mausoleums, 100 public baths, 10 monumental pillars, 10 public wells and 150 bridges. All of these Barani further says, were endowed with lands for their future maintenance.' But the greatest of these public works, perhaps, was the Jumna canal by which water was brought from Karnal to irrigate the arid tract of Hansi and Hissar on the border of the desert of Bikaner and which has been utilized by the British government in the alignment of the western Jumna canal and, in a way, still serves its original purpose. The early Muslim kings of India, as a rule, showed no interest in such works of public utility and consequently no works for irrigation had been constructed in upper India before the era of Firuz Tughlak. It is most probable that, having seen the irrigation system of Telingana in active operation and having understood the immense benefits which resulted from it, the Sultan was induced by his minister Khan Jahan, a renegade Hindu from Telingana, to make a beginning in the arid districts around his capital. *Works of public utility*

The Sultan was not only a great builder but a great gardener

as well. He is said to have laid out 'twelve hundred gardens in the neighbourhood of Delhi and many elsewhere, and the produce, among which white and black grapes of seven varieties are mentioned, brought in 1,50,000 rupees per annum net to the treasury.' Thus the three new sources of revenue, namely, the water dues levied on canal waters, reclaimed lands irrigated by the new canals, and the market gardens added nearly 'thirty thousand pounds' to the annual revenue of the state.

Public Gardens as source of revenue Agriculture, trade and commerce were revived as the result of some of the very considerate and beneficent measures of Firuz Tughlak. The digging of wells, reservoirs and irrigation canals brought new land under plough and a number of thriving villages sprang up in different parts of the empire. The Sultan further encouraged the peasantry to stick to their lands by lightening their burden of taxation. He revised the revenue regulations of the previous reign and reduced the government demand so as to leave ample provision for the cultivator to live in peace and contentment. A number of vexatious taxes levied by Ala-ud-Din and Muhammad Tughlak on small traders and shopkeepers like flower-sellers, fishers, cotton-cleaners, cooks, etc. were all abolished. "It is better," says the Sultan in his Memoirs, "to relinquish this portion of the revenue than realize it at the expense of so much distress caused by the discretionary powers vested in the tax-gatherers and officers of authority." The result of all these economic measures as already remarked, was that agriculture and commerce revived and the country enjoyed prosperity during the greater part of the Sultan's reign. The account of the reign given by Barani leaves an impression on the mind of the reader that riches and prosperity abounded in the country and the people, especially the peasant and the agricultural classes were very contented and satisfied. 'Their houses,' he writes, 'were replete with grain, property, horses and furniture; every one had plenty of gold and silver; no woman was without her ornaments and no house was wanting in excellent beds and couches. Wealth abounded and comforts were general.'

The reforms introduced by Firuz Shah in the departments of Law and Justice are, indeed, praiseworthy. They revealed the gentle nature of the Sultan and show how well-disposed he was towards his subjects. 'It has been usual in former times,' writes the Sultan in his Memoirs, 'to spill Muhammadan blood on trivial occasions and for small crimes to mutilate and torture them, by putting out eyes, by pulverising the bones of the living criminal with mallets, by burning the body with fire, by crucifixion and by nailing the hands and feet, by

Law and justice and other humanitarian measures

flaying alive, by the operation of hamstringing, and by cutting human beings to pieces. God in his infinite goodness, having been pleased to confer on me the power, has also inspired me with the disposition to put an end to these practices.'¹ The merciful nature of Sultan Firuz is also manifest in his kind disposition towards the poor and the destitute for whom he endeavoured to provide suitable occupation. A large number of slaves, we are told, were relieved of their degrading position and employed for training in various industries and handicrafts run by the state. The amount of care bestowed on these unfortunate creatures was bound to produce good results and we are told by Barani that as many as '12,000 slaves became artisans of various kinds' and useful members of society.

It will be remembered that Ala-ud-Din Khalji had discouraged the system of granting jagirs and assignments in lieu of cash salaries to his military officers. After his death, however, the entire machinery of administration was thrown out of gear owing to palace revolutions and dynastic changes. Ghiyas-ud-Din Tughlak, during his short period of rule, had no time to restore the wise measures of Ala-ud-Din. Muhammad Tughlak, though not in favour of granting jagirs or revenue assignments to his officers, was compelled by circumstances to accept though partially, this rather pernicious and ruinous system. The failure of the rains, the outbreak of famine, the political disorders and the consequent difficulties of collection of revenue left the Sultan no choice but to grant assignments and farm out the revenues of big divisions and provinces to the highest bidders. Firuz Shah, in his turn, reduced the practice to a regular system. All provinces of the empire were given away as farms to revenue farmers.² His admirer, the historian Barani, says that no harm came out of this and that 'not one leaf of dominion was shaken in the palace of sovereignty.' In spite of the assurance given by Barani one is inclined to think that the system of granting military fiefs tended to weaken the power of the central government and led to the oppression of the ryots. Indeed, no sooner was the strong and benevolent hand of Firuz withdrawn than the great fabric of the empire fell to pieces and the pampered royal army could not make even a show of resistance to the undisciplined hordes of Timur when he marched unopposed to Delhi in 1398, only ten years after the death of the great Sultan.

Muhammad Tughlak had removed his own name from the

¹Quoted by J. D. Rees, *Epochs of Indian History, The Muhammadans*, (4. 1001-1761, p. 79, London, 1894).

²The military fief-holders subdivided their fiefs; even the soldiers of the army received grants of land. Big officers of the army were, sometimes given whole districts and provinces.

Khutba and the coins and had replaced it by that of the Khalifa showing thereby that he exercised the power only on behalf of the Supreme ruler of Islam. Firuz Tughlak though not less pious or loyal to the head of the Muslim theocracy took a more historical and reasonable view of the matter and restored his own name and that of many of his predecessors in the Khutba. He also reverted to the common practice of inscribing the name of the Sultan on the coins.

*Firuz Shah
restores his
name in the
Khutba*

Firuz Tughlak was a devout and pious ruler according to the best Muhammadan ideal. He kept the fasts and feasts and joined in public prayers and never did anything without consulting the holy Koran. He was also merciful, benevolent and just, but after perusing his own writings (Fatuh-at-i-Firuzshahi)

*The religious
policy of
Firuz Shah*

one is inclined to agree with Mr. V. Smith that 'it was not possible for Firuz Shah in his age to rise, as Akbar did, to the conception that the ruler of Hindustan should cherish all his subjects alike, whether Muslim or Hindu, and allow every man absolute freedom not only of conscience, but of public worship.' He imposed Jizya¹ even on the Brahmins who had hitherto been exempt, and sternly forbade the public worship of idols; desecrated some of the Hindu temples and prohibited the erection of new ones. He induced the Hindus by special indulgences, such as relief from the poll-tax, to come over to Islam. 'I encouraged my infidel subjects,' writes the Sultan, 'to embrace the religion of the Prophet and I proclaimed that every one who repeated the creed and became a Muslim should be exempted from the Jizya or poll-tax.'² He repressed with equal severity the licentious Hindu Saktas and the Muhammadan heretical sects. He could be fierce when his religious fanaticism was roused. 'I cut off the heads of the elders of this sect (Hindu Saktas) and imprisoned and banished the rest, so that the abominable practices were put an end to.' At another place the Sultan records the punishments he inflicted on the Muslim sect of the Shias or Rawafiz who dared to preach in public. Several were visited with capital punishment and their books were burnt in public.

It is, indeed, a pity that Firuz Shah should have tarnished his fair name by acts of religious intolerance such as are enumerated

*Estimate of
Firuz Shah*

above. When due allowance is made, however, for his education and the age in which he lived 'Firuz Shah, whatever may have been his defects and weaknesses, deserves much credit for having mitigated, in some respects, the horrible practices of his predecessors, and

¹Jizya was a military tax levied upon non-Muslims in lieu of military service.

²Quoted from V. Smith's *Oxford History of India*, p. 250.

for having introduced some tincture of humane feelings into the administration.'

Besides the general administration which he tried to improve in his own way, the untiring Firuz-Shah also found time to invite the learned men of the metropolis and exchange views with them on questions of Law and *Shariat*. He bestowed liberal pensions and Jagirs on them. He also founded numerous schools and endowed each with a revenue-free estate for its maintenance—the most famous of these was the Firuzshahi Madrasa at Firuzabad. This college had a number of learned scholars on its teaching staff who did a free rendering of some of the Sanskrit books into Persian language. The *Dalayal-i-Firuzshahi*, for instance, is a free translation of a Sanskrit work seized from the library of the Jwala Mukhi shrine. The works of Zia Barani and Shams-i-Siraj Afif were written during the reign of Firuzshah.

It has been urged that some of Firuzshah's political and administrative measures—like the restoration of the jagir system and his excessive partiality for men of his own religious faith have had their share in bringing about the ultimate collapse of the empire. This may be correct. But it might also be urged with equal force that by his wise, conciliatory and sympathetic policy, Firuz did defer the "death-dance" of the empire for thirty seven long years. When he ascended the throne in A.D. 1351 the process of disruption was in full swing. The provinces south of the Vindhyas were already lost and the sovereignty of Delhi over Gujarat and Daulatabad existed only in name. Bengal, too, was slipping from the grip of the Sultan. Had Muhammad Tughlak survived longer or had Firuz continued the policy of his predecessor, the ruin of the empire would have come about much earlier. He was wisely content, as we have remarked before, to rule well over a limited dominion than to run a mad race for the unstable sovereignty over the whole of India.

The old age of the Sultan was troubled by the loss of his great Wazir, Khan-i-Jahan¹ who died in 1370, and three years later the death of Firuz's eldest son, Fateh Khan, made the aged emperor more miserable. He had now reached his seventy-seventh year and his powers were fast declining. In 1387, the second Khan-i-Jahan also died as the result of a plot made by prince Muhammad Khan. Firuz Tughlak was now unable to carry on the administration and therefore abdicated in favour of his son who ascended the throne under the title of Nasir-ud-Din Muhammad. The prince, however, belied the

*Abdication and
death of Firuz
Shah A.D. 1388*

¹Makbul Khan, Khan-i-Jahan, was a Hindu convert from Telingana. Under Muhammad Tughlak he served as governor of Multan, and in the time of Firuz Shah he was elevated to the position of the first minister of the realm. It is said that Firuz Shah owed much of the peace and prosperity of his reign to this talented minister. When Makbul Khan died, his place was taken by his son who was also honoured with the title of Khan-i-Jahan.

expectations of his father. He was dissolute and given to pleasure and his misgovernment excited a formidable rebellion which was quelled only on the appearance of the old king in person. The Sultan next appointed his grandson to administer his realm and very soon afterwards died in October 1383, 'worn out with weakness' at the age of ninety.

NOTES

(A) (i) The Tughlaks came into power as champions of the Muslim cause which was being seriously threatened at the time, by the convert Hindus like Malik Kafur and Malik Khusrau. The imperial policy of the Tughlak kings was different from that of the Khalji kings. Ala-ud-Din was contented with the acknowledgement of his suzerainty by the Hindu rulers of the south, whereas Ghiyas-ud-Din and Muhammad Tughlak both believed in the policy of direct annexation. The kingdoms of Deogiri, Warangal and Dwarasamudra were all annexed to Delhi. The empire of Delhi thus reached its widest territorial limits under the Tughlaks, but its integrity could not be maintained for long.

(ii) Muhammad Tughlak's period of rule is interesting and instructive. Some of his experiments indeed, failed, but they show that the Sultan was capable of ingenious schemes and possessed a marvellous breadth of vision. His ambitious schemes of conquest proved detrimental to the interests of the State. (iii) His preference for foreigners (Centurians) over Turks, Khaljis and the Hindus of India for state services brought disastrous results. The revolts in Gujarat, Khandesh and Deogiri were all brought about by these disloyal officers.

(B) Firuz Tughlak called a halt to the policy of expansion. He let slip the provinces of Bengal and Sind and made no effort to recover the Deccan. His reforms in administration are, indeed, worthy of note. He was the first Muslim king of India to have accepted the principle that the duties of a sovereign are not limited only to the protection of person and property of his subjects, but that the state must also adopt measures which contribute to their happiness and general welfare. He revised the entire penal code and abolished some of the very brutal forms of punishment in vogue in the mediaeval age. He made elaborate arrangements for irrigating lands, reduced the taxes on land, and abolished a number of other vexatious duties on small trades and professions. A number of schools and colleges were also maintained at state expense where free education was given to the people.

(C) But all the beneficent activities of Firuz could not stay the hand of disintegration and the empire of the Tughlaks rapidly declined after his death. (For causes of this decline see next chapter)

QUESTIONS

1. Narrate the circumstances under which the Tughlaks came to possess the throne of Delhi. What is their contribution to the growth and consolidation of the Muslim political power in India?
2. Briefly describe the conquests of the first two Tughlak Sultans. In what respects did these conquests differ from those of the Khaljis and with what results?

3. "A tragedy of high intentions self-defeated." This is how Lane-Poole sums up the administration of Muhammad Tughlak. Explain.
4. Write a note on Muhammad Tughlak with particular reference to (a) His policy of taxation, (b) His currency reforms, (c) Causes of his unpopularity.
5. Write a note on Firuz Tughlak with particular reference to (a) His Revenue and Taxation policy. (b) His works of public utility. (c) His religious policy.
6. Explain the causes of the failure of the Tughlaks to maintain their hold on the empire.

CHAPTER XIX

Collapse of the Sultanate

THE TUGHLAKS, THE SAYYIDS AND THE LODHIS, 1388-1526.

After Firuz Shah's death in 1388, anarchy reigned in Delhi owing to disputes regarding the succession, while the provincial governors and fiefholders divided the sultanate between themselves. A number of weak princes successively ascended the throne but their short reigns were uneventful and the story of their struggle for 'a dishonoured throne' may be dismissed with a few brief remarks. Firuz Shah's two able sons had died during his lifetime and his grandson, Ghiyas-ud-Din, proved a very unworthy successor. After a brief reign of five months he was deposed and killed on February 18, 1389. He was succeeded by his cousin, Abu Bakr, another grandson of Firuz, who was, in his turn, deposed after eight months by his uncle Muhammad, who now ascended the throne as Nasir-ud-Din Muhammad Tughlak II, in February, 1390. Muhammad, it will be remembered, had fled from Delhi in 1387 when his father Firuz had abdicated, but he had since established some sort of authority from Samana to Nagarkot in the Panjab and, feeling himself strong enough, invaded Delhi and captured the throne of his father. He reigned for nearly four years and all this time he was troubled by a series of rebellions. On his death in 1394, his son Humayun ascended the throne with the proud title of Sikandar Shah, but died after a brief reign of six weeks and was succeeded by his brother Mahmud who nominally occupied the throne for eighteen years (1394-1412). But the kingdom was already distracted by factions and serious disorders, and a rival court was set up at Firuzabad near old Delhi by Nusrat Khan (1394-98), a grandson of the late Sultan Firuz Shah. Some nobles remained with Mahmud, others espoused the cause of his cousin Nusrat and a civil war continued at the capital for three years with the result that Delhi totally lost its power and prestige.

The process of disintegration had begun during the closing years of Muhammad Tughlak. The Hindu kingdoms of the Deccan had regained their independence. Ahsan Shah had set up an independent kingdom in Madura and Hasan Gangu had established his authority at Daulatabad. Firuz Shah made no effort to recover these lost provinces of Delhi. During

*Six successors
of Firuz Shah,
1388-1414*

*Dismemberment
of the empire—
its causes*

his mild rule, the forces of disruption rather gained in momentum and two more provinces namely Bengal and Sind were lost to the empire. After his death, the distracted state of government at the centre led to the further dismemberment of the empire. The provincial governors seized this opportunity and one by one they all declared their independence till Delhi was reduced to the dimensions of a small principality. Malik Sarwar Khwaja Jahan, the Wazir of the empire was the first to set up an independent government at Jaunpur and the governors of Gujarat, Malwa and Khandesh followed his example. The convulsions of Muhammad Tughlak's reign, the mild rule of Firuz and the incompetence of the later Tughlaks—all contributed to speed up the collapse of the empire. Among other causes of the decline of their power may be mentioned the political and administrative policy of the Tughlak kings. The policy of replacing the Hindu rulers of the Deccan by Muhammadan governors of doubtful loyalty adopted by Muhammad Tughlak proved to be an unwise and mischievous policy. His choice of employing foreigners in preference to the Turks, the Khaljis and the Hindus was an unhappy choice. These men had no interest in the fortunes of their employer or in the stability of his dynasty. They fomented disaffection and created troubles for the Sultan rather than helping him in maintaining peace and order. Again, the system of granting jagirs and revenue assignments to men and officers of the army as well the practice of farming out the revenues of large provinces to influential nobles of the court introduced in his later years by Muhammad and further developed and systematized by Firuz led to great abuses. The whole system was pernicious. The revenue farmer who got the farm at the highest bid either rackrented the cultivator to raise the stipulated sum (which course drove the cultivators into revolt) or when he was unable to pay the stipulated sum found no course open to him but rebellion. The slave establishments of Firuz Shah which had exceeded all reasonable limits were another source of weakness. The slaves of this age were not capable, efficient and loyal like their forebears who could chalk out high careers for themselves. They only embroiled themselves in palace intrigues and created obstruction in the way of the smooth running of the administration. The religious policy of Firuz Shah had estranged his Hindu subjects and his excessive partiality for his own religious tenets had led to the persecution of some Muslim heretics too. Firuz Shah's successors were all weak and imbecile and they failed to stay the process of disintegration which was completed by the invasion of Timur in 1398 A.D. (see also page 315.)

Such was the chaotic state of the kingdom of Delhi when Timur descended upon it with his ninety-two regiments of a thousand horse each. This great conqueror, who is commonly

known as Timur-i-lang, was born in 1335 and had attained the throne of Samarkand in 1368 at the age of thirty-three, and then entered on a career of conquest. He soon annexed Khwari-zim, subdued Turkestan and overran all Persia and Mesopotamia. He then led his armies to Asia Minor on the west and also occupied Afghanistan on the east. Having thus established full control over the great Asiatic land route, Amir Timur turned his attention towards India, the fabulous wealth and the distracted state of government of which were sufficient inducement for him to undertake the expedition in person. The advance guard of Timur's army under his grandson, Pir Muhammad overran the countries west of the Indus and early in 1398 he crossed that river, captured Uchh and then advanced upon Multan, of which he obtained possession after a siege of six months. In September, Timur himself crossed the Indus at Attock with a cavalry force said to number about 92,000, and having easily overpowered Mubarik Khan, the governor of the Panjab, the fierce invader pressed southwards and joined his grandson near Multan. The combined troops now advanced upon Delhi and on their way looted and massacred the population of Bhatnair and Tulamba. In December, the huge invading host of Turki horsemen lay encamped on the plain of Panipat. But there was no man to oppose them. A week later Timur was before the capital and, while he was reconnoitring, the king (Mahmud) and his *Wazir* Mallu Ikbalkhan, sallied out of the city with a miserable force of 5,000 horse only to be driven back after a slight skirmish. Then followed the decisive battle.

The Indian army mustered about 10,000 horse and 40,000 foot with 125 war elephants and was commanded by Mahmud and his minister, Ikbalk Khan. The elephants filled Timur's men with fear as they had no previous experience of Indian warfare but the intrepid Mughal took unusual precautions to allay the terrors of his troopers. He surrounded his camp with a ditch and rampart, and prepared iron spikes to be cast before the dreaded monsters. The stores, cattle and the women as well as 'the learned men of the army' were stationed at the other end of the camp during the battle, and it was on this occasion that a large number of prisoners, numbering about 100,000 men, were massacred in cold blood as Timur thought that they could not be safely left in the camp behind. In the battle that ensued Mahmud was defeated and fled from the capital. Timur entered the city and received the homage of the principal inhabitants, and on Friday he caused himself to be proclaimed emperor of India when public prayers were read in his name. A brawl having arisen between Timur's soldiers and the citizens a general pillage followed and the city was systematically plundered for five days.

Timur remained at Delhi only for a fortnight and then set out

on his return homewards. From Delhi, Timur went to Meerut which was taken and the garrison put to the sword. He then turned towards Hardwar and marching along the foot of the mountains, where it was easy to cross the rivers, Timur quitted India (March, 1399) via Kangra and Jammu, leaving 'anarchy, famine and pestilence behind.'

Timur's invasion dealt the final blow to the already tottering sultanate of Delhi. The government was completely paralysed. The provincial governors and fief-holders, taking advantage of the dislocation of the central authority at Delhi, set themselves to organise and consolidate their individual resources and eventually each one of these declared his independence. The fiefs of Kanauj, Oudh, Jaunpur and Bihar were formed into an independent kingdom under Malik Khwaja Jahan, the eunuch minister of Mahmud Tughlak, the fief of Malwa (Dhar) came in the possession of Dilawar Khan and those of Biana and Samana passed under Shamas Khan and Ghalili Khan. Multan, Dipalpur and Upper Sind were annexed to the empire of Timur who left his deputy Khizr Khan to govern these provinces. The Wazir Ikbal Khan retained the government of Delhi in his own hands for the time being and later on drove out Nusrat Shah and recalled Mahmud Tughlak from Gujarat where he had fled after his defeat at Panipat. The Rajput princes of Gwalior, Mewar and Marwar recovered their independence.

*Effect of
Timur's
invasion*

The city of Delhi, too, suffered heavily from the invasion of Timur. The wholesale destruction of stores of grain and standing crops by the invaders resulted in famine and 'the thousands of putrefying corpses polluted the air and the water and bred pestilence.' A contemporary writer feelingly observes, "Delhi was utterly ruined, and those of its people who were left died, while for two whole months not a bird moved its wings in the city."

It is said that Timur, on his return home, had taken a large number of Indian masons and artisans to work at his buildings in Samarkand. These men taught Indian handicrafts to the people of Central Asia. This invasion may, therefore, be said to have established once again India's cultural contact with Samarkand and the regions round it after a lapse of about a thousand years since the fall of the Greek rule in Bactria.

As already remarked, Delhi was held by Ikbal Khan in the name of his fugitive master Mahmud Tughlak who was living at the court of Muzaffar Khan of Gujarat. He returned to Delhi in 1401, but was content to receive a pension which was allotted to him by the Wazir and set up a separate court at Kanauj. The death of Ikbal in November, 1405 in a battle with Khizr Khan, Deputy of Timur, set him free and enabled Mahmud

*The end of the
Tughlak
dynasty*

Tughlak to return to the capital, where he spent in peace the remaining seven years of his life. With Mahmud's death in 1412, the Tughlak dynasty came to an end.

Khizr Khan, who had held Panjab on behalf of Timur, now advanced upon Delhi and seized the throne and laid the foundation of a new dynasty known as the Sayyid rulers of Delhi, since the founder claimed descent from the family of the Prophet. Khizr Khan and his three successors¹ continued to rule in Delhi

and a few adjoining districts for about forty years, but the history of their several reigns is little more than a record of marchings and counter-marchings in the endeavour to compel the allegiance of rebellious barons, and to collect the revenues of the state. How small their territory was will be realized when it is stated that almost yearly campaigns were undertaken to extort the annual tribute from the chief of Rohilkhand to the north of Delhi, from the ruler of Mewat about a dozen miles to the south of the capital, and from Etawah in the Jumna Doab. Throughout the period we read of frequent rebellions in Sirhind and the Panjab as well as in the Doab and even the nearer districts of Etawah, Mewat, Gwalior and Rohilkhand gradually broke away from the control of the Sayyids.

It does not seem necessary to follow the events of the Sayyid period in detail, as there are but few incidents of mark during their tenure of power. The last of the line named Ala-ud-Din was allowed to retire to Budaun where he lived in peace for many years.²

When Ala-ud-Din abdicated in 1450 and had retired to Budaun, Bahlol Lodhi, the governor of the Panjab, was invited to carry

*Bahlol founds
the Lodhi
dynasty and
consolidates
his power,
1450-1526*

on the government of the capital. This Bahlol Khan was descended from a rich family of the Lodhi Afghan merchants who traded between Kabul and India and some of whom, as was common at the time, entered the service of the sovereigns of India. The uncle of Bahlol had fought under the banner of Khizr Khan in 1405, had slain the minister Ikbāl Khan in single combat and was for that service rewarded with the governorship of Sirhind, to which Bahlol Khan succeeded as independent ruler on the death of his patron and relative. Now as the opportunity was offered, Bahlol seized the throne of Delhi and laid the foundations of a new

¹The Sayyids made no positive contribution to kingship nor were they seriously considered by the people as sovereign rulers. Khizr Khan never issued coins in his own name. His coins were struck in the name of the Tughlaks and the Khutba was recited in the name of the Mughals (Timur). Khizr's son adopted the title of Shah Sultan and began to strike coins in his name with the result that the Mughals created trouble for him.

²For the details of the names of the rulers of the dynasty see the list of the Emperors of Delhi appended at the end of this chapter.

dynasty known as the Lodhi, from the Afghan clan to which Bahlol belonged. He was a man of some ability and prowess in war and during the thirty-eight years of his rule he did much to restore the vanished power of Delhi.

Having reduced to submission several fief-holders and chieftains who had enjoyed varying degrees of local autonomy in the Doab and round about Delhi, Bahlol Khan engaged in a war with the king of Jaunpur. This province, having thrown off its allegiance to the emperor of Delhi during the anarchy following Timur's invasion, had been consolidated

*Recovery of
Jaunpur
& other
provinces 1478*

into a powerful monarchy by the successors of Khwaja Jahan, and its ruler Hussain Shah now offered an open challenge to the Sultan of Delhi. A prolonged war between Delhi and Jaunpur followed which extended over a period of a quarter of a century. A detailed account of these campaigns would be neither interesting nor instructive. Suffice it to say that at the end of this period in 1478, this long drawn struggle ended in favour of Bahlol Lodhi. Hussain Shah fled to Bihar leaving his treasures, palaces and stables to be seized by the Lodhis. As the Sultan had little faith in the loyalty of the Afghan barons, he appointed his son Barbak Shah as viceroy of the newly annexed province. The victory over the rulers of Jaunpur added to the power and prestige of Bahlol Khan; who now proceeded against the chief of Kalpi, Dholpur and Gwalior and made them all acknowledge him as their overlord.

Bahlol Khan came to occupy the throne of Delhi at a time when the prestige of the Crown had fallen to its lowest ebb. To restore it to the height it has reached in the days of Balban or Ala-ud-Din Khalji had become almost impossible. And more so now when the Afghans had come into power and had established a sort of hegemony rather than a monarchy.

*Bahlol Khan
& the Afghan
Nobility*

They were divided into clans and tribes and the tribal leaders looked upon Bahlol Khan as leader of them all. But they were not prepared to give him a position beyond that. Bahlol also realised this. We are told by the author of the *Tarikh-i-Daudi* that Bahlol Khan would not sit on the throne even on an occasion of public audience and would never make his noble stand before him; nor would he issue orders savouring of command. In his dress too he was as simple as in his manners.

Bahlol Lodhi reigned till 1488, when he died of a disease from which he had long suffered. It is said that he intended to divide his dominions among his five sons, but on the advice of his nobles he dropped the idea and on his death, the latter chose Nizam Khan as his father's successor. He assumed the royal style of Sultan Sikandar Ghazi.

*Sikandar
Lodhi
1488-1517*

Sikandar was not less vigorous and ambitious than his father. He continued the policy of recovering the lost possessions of Delhi and brought back Gwalior and Bidar to their allegiance to the empire. Another important political event of the reign was the expulsion of his brother Barbak Shah from Jaunpur. Barbak, who had been appointed governor of Jaunpur by his father, refused to acknowledge the election of Sikandar to the throne and took up arms to assert his own right. He was, however, defeated and afterwards pardoned, but his bad government of the province was taken as an excuse for his removal from office and for a more definite annexation of that kingdom. After Jaunpur, Sikandar marched on to Bihar and annexed that province to the kingdom of Delhi.

Although the king undertook many minor campaigns and was, for the most part of his reign, busy in reducing to submission the various refractory chiefs, yet Sikandar enjoyed long intervals of peace during which he employed his great talents and learning in improving the civil administration of his dominions.

*His character
and civil
government*

During his reign considerable improvements were made in public roads and communications as well as in the organization of police and horseposts. The literary accomplishments of the Sultan were considerable for the age. He was a poet and also took special interest in 'medical lore.' Sultan Sikandar Ghazi, as the author of the *Tarikh-i-Daudi* tells us, was specially interested in safeguarding the interests of the poor and small traders and agriculturists. By a special edict he abolished vexatious duties on corn and other articles of daily use and earned the gratitude of the poor and the needy. His reign was, therefore, remarkable for the prevalence of exceptionally low prices for both food and other things 'so that small means enabled their possessors to live comfortably.'

In the routine of his daily life, Sikandar was a man of very sober habits and loved justice to a great degree. He never allowed men of dissolute character to come near him and had set apart a special hour to listen personally to the complaints of the poor.

Sikandar Lodhi is described by Muhammadan authors as a devout Muslim who strictly followed Koranic law and practice. But he had very little tolerance for his Hindu subjects and on a trifling pretext destroyed some of their temples. The famous shrine of Mathura was converted into a mosque for Muslim use.¹

During the reign of Bahlol Lodhi, the fief-holders of Etawah, Biana, Gwalior, and Dhaulpur created much trouble and were

a source of constant anxiety to the Sultan. Sikandar's knowledge of military strategy suggested to him the necessity of selecting some spot for army head-quarters from where he would be able

*Foundation of
Agra*

¹V. Smith, *Oxford History of India*, p. 254.

to exercise effective control over these feudal nobles. He, accordingly, chose for this purpose the site where the city of Agra now stands. The Sultan also took up his residence there.

Bahlol Khan, as we have said before, made no efforts to impose his authority over his Afghan peers. Rather he deliberately avoided to do acts which might give them the impression that he was the king and the ruler.

*Sikandar and
Afghan nobility*

But now a generation had passed and Bahlol's son and successor, Sikandar, had different notions of the power and privileges of a Sultan. He held the interests of the state dearer than those of his unruly nobles. He kept them in proper check and made them obey his orders. The method which he devised to achieve his object was a close scrutiny and audit of the revenue account of their baronial fiefs and those found guilty of embezzlement of public money were punished. They often smarted and grew restive under these regulations and on more than one occasion even hatched a conspiracy against the Sultan but their efforts proved abortive.

Sikandar died in 1517 and his eldest son, Ibrahim, ascended the throne without opposition, but it was not long before his brother Jalal Khan, then governor of Kalpi, captured Jaunpur and declared himself king. The rebellion was suppressed; Jalal fled but was pursued and arrested and eventually put to death.

*Ibrahim Lodhi
1517-1526*

Ibrahim did not inherit the virtues of his father, and his haughty and insolent conduct gave great offence to the proud Afghan nobles and the discontent ultimately resulted in outbreaks and rebellions throughout the empire.

Afghan polity

Almost all important offices in the state were held by the Afghans of the Lohani, Farmuli and the Lodhi tribes. They looked upon their fiefs and Jagirs as their own right, purchased by their sword rather than as gifts made to them by their sovereign whom they regarded as no more than *primus inter pares*. Bahlol Khan was able to exercise control over them partly by showing regard for their personal prejudices and partly by playing one against the other. Sikandar Khan in his turn, dealt more sternly with them but he, too, proceeded cautiously. He knew when to be severe and when to be lenient. Ibrahim was, by nature timid and suspicious and during and after the revolt of his brother, Jalal Khan, began to doubt the loyalty of all his clansmen. He deprived some of the jagirdars of their fiefs and imprisoned others with the result that many who became apprehensive of a similar fate, rose in rebellion. Bahadur Khan Lohani of Bihar declared his independence and Hussain Khan Karmuli followed suit in Jaunpur. Daulat Khan Lodhi, governor of the Panjab, also revolted, but instead of proclaiming his independence he invited Babur, the ruler of Kabul, to come and assert his right to the throne of Delhi by virtue of the conquests

of his ancestor Timur. Babur was only looking for an opportunity and on the invitation of Daulat Khan marched on Delhi in 1526 and defeated Ibrahim at the battle of Panipat. Ibrahim was slain during the action and with his death, the dynasty of the Lodhi Afghans came to an end.

NOTES

The outstanding features of the history of India during the period of one century and a half after the death of Firuz Tughlak are: (i) the invasion of Timur, (ii) the collapse of the Sultanate (iii) attempts made by the Lodhi Sultans for the restoration of the integrity of the empire. Before this difficult task could be achieved by the Lodhi rulers, Babur invaded the country and defeated Ibrahim and seized the throne of Delhi in A.D. 1526.

EMPERORS OF DELHI 1320-1526

Serial No.	NAME.	Date A.D.	REMARKS
1	Ghiyas-ud-Din Tughlak. ..	1321-25	Original name Ghazi Malik, killed Khusrau Malik, elected Sultan by the courtiers of Delhi. Killed by the fall of a pavilion.
2	Muhammad bin Tughlak. ..	1325-51	Son of No. 1. Original name Muhammad Juna Khan. Suspected by some as the murderer of his father. Shifted his capital to Daulatabad. Introduced brass and copper currency. Sent expeditions to Persia and the Himalayan regions and indulged in other impracticable schemes which made him unpopular with his subjects. Next to that of Aurangzeb, his empire was the largest. Died natural death.
3	Firuz Shah. ..	1351-88	Cousin of No. 2. Firuz is chiefly remembered for the works of public utility. Died a natural death.
4	Ghiyas-ud-Din Tughlak II. ..	1388-89	Grandson of No. 3. Killed by his cousins, February, 1389.
5	Abu Bakr. ..	Feb-Nov., 1389	Cousin of No. 4. Deposed by his uncle.
6	Nasir-ud-Din Muhammad Tughlak. ..	1390-94	Son of No. 3. Died a natural death.

Serial No.	NAME	Date, A.D.	REMARKS
7	Humayun Tughlak.	1394	Son of No. 6. Died after a short reign of forty-five days.
8	Mahmud Tughlak.	1394-1412	Son of No. 6. There were serious disturbances at Delhi—rival claimant being Nusrat Khan—after Timur's invasion, 1398, Mahmud fled to Gujarat. But the real power was wielded by the minister, Ikbāl Khan. Returned to Delhi, 1401.
9	Sayyid Khizr Khan.	1412-21	Nos. 9 to 13 are the Sayyid rulers of Delhi. V. Smith following Mr. E. Thomas considers that the Sayyid rulers never assumed the royal style or struck coins in their names.
10	Sayyid Mubarik	1421-35	Son of No. 9. Had to wage ceaseless war against the Khokhars under their chief named Jasrath Rai. Murdered Feb. 1434.
11	Sayyid Muhammad.	1435-44	Nephew of No. 10.
12	Sayyid Ala-ud-Din.	1444-50	Son of No. 11. Abdicated in favour of Bahlol Lodhi.
13	Bahlol Khan	1450-88	Died in 1478. Full official designation Sultan Bahlol Lodhi founder of the Lodhi dynasty. Did much to restore the vanished power of Delhi.
14	Sikandar Lodhi	1488-1517	Son of No. 13. Original name Nizam Khan. Assumed the royal style of Sultan Sikandar Ghazi—was a religious enthusiast. Completed the task of reviving the territory of the empire which was begun by his father. Also improved the administration.
15	Ibrahim Lodhi	1517-26	Son of No. 14. Last of the dynasty—killed in the battle of Panipat.

QUESTIONS

- (1.) Give an account of the invasion of Timur and estimate its effects on the stability of the Delhi Sultanate.
- (2.) Describe the efforts made by the Lodhi Sultans to restore power and prestige of the empire. Why did they fail?

CHAPTER XX
Northern India

PROVINCIAL DYNASTIES, 1398—1526.

Insulators Can not be used in India because I do not want to use those in India.
Shahab

The battle of Panipat in A.D. 1526 marks the close of the mediaeval age and ushers in a new era in India. The first Muhammadan empire, which had been founded by Kutb-ud-Din Aibak in 1206, was now finally extinguished, after a long and chequered career of three hundred years, and the second Muhammadan empire known to history as the empire of the Mughals, was founded by Babur. The year 1526 may, therefore, be taken as a convenient opportunity for noticing briefly the growth of various forces—political, social, religious and economic—which obtained in the country during the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century.

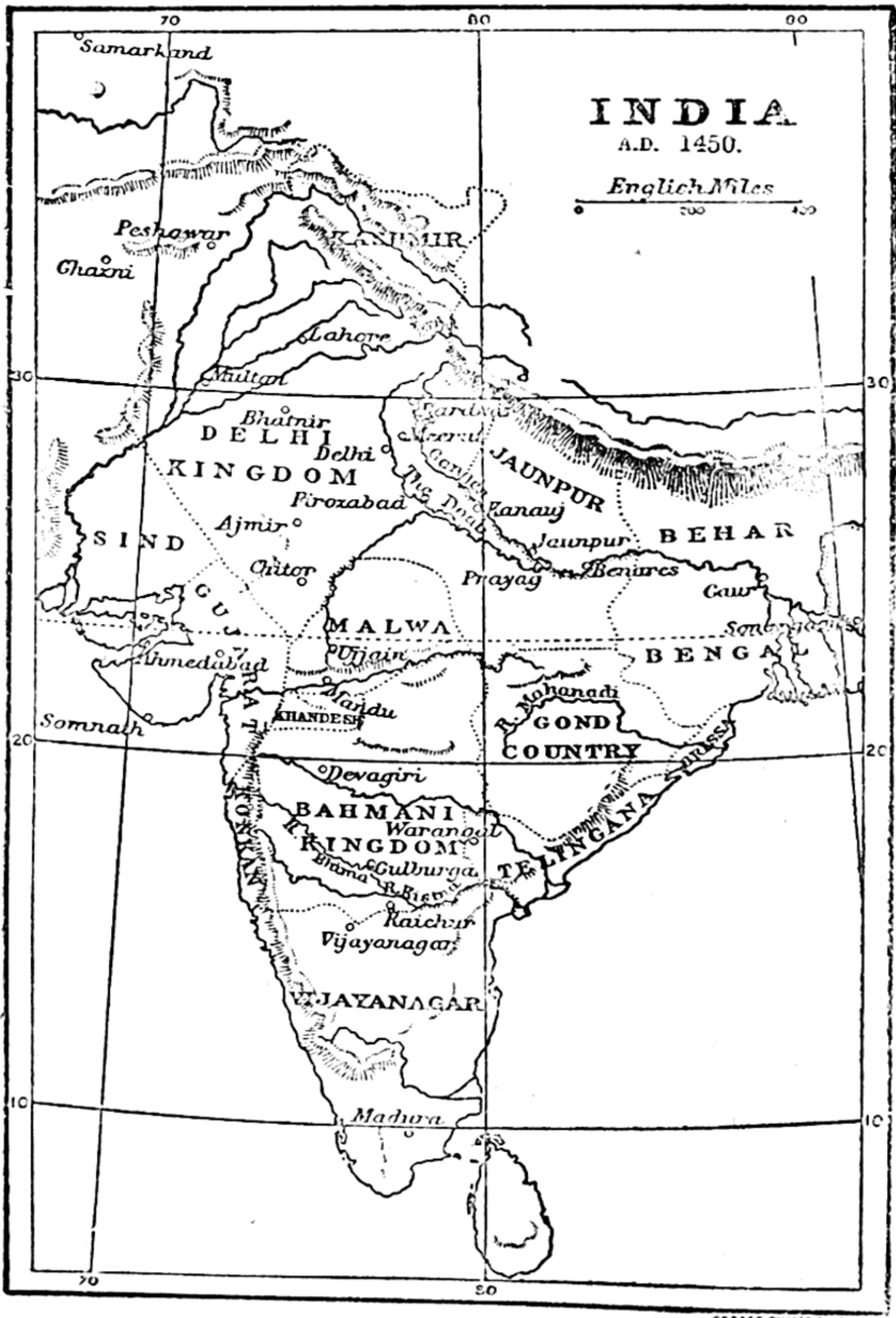
A. D. 1526—
The epoch making year

A detailed story of the political conquest of the country by the Muslims has already been described in the foregoing chapters, but it will not be out of place to summarize here what has been said before. We have seen how the defeat of Prithviraja, at the battlefield of Tarain paved the way for further conquest of India by Shahab-ud-Din Ghorî and his lieutenants. This process of conquest, once begun, did not stop till the whole country was made to acknowledge the sway of the Delhi sultanate. Kutb-ud-Din, Iltutmish and Balban of the Slave dynasty spread the Muhammadan empire from the Indus to the Brahmaputra during the thirteenth century. Next in order come the Khaljis and the Tughlak Sultans of Delhi whose armies carried the banner of Islam far and wide during the first fifty years of the fourteenth century. Ala-ud-Din Khalji extended the limits of the empire to the Deccan, and Muhammad Tughlak carried them still further south. He conquered Warangal and destroyed the last great Rajput house in southern India in 1323 and carried the boundaries of the sultanate to their widest limits.

Expansion and decline of Muhammadan power

But these conquests were not knit together by permanent institutions. The bond of religion in Islam was, no doubt, strong, but the heterogeneous racial elements, Turki, Afghan, Persian, and Arab, had not been brought into a coherent union and they frequently broke up into factions. Nor was the central government so well organised as to be able to put down these factions. Again, the absence of proper means of communication

constituted another important factor which contributed to the dismemberment of the empire. The governors stationed in distant provinces could afford, with impunity, to disregard the



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wishes of the government of Delhi. The temptation to break away from the power which could not effectually control them was, indeed, great. One by one the outlying provinces became

rebellious and eventually, as the central authority grew weak, the provincial governors threw off the imperial yoke and set up their independent kingdoms. But it is necessary to remember, as the late Sir R. C. Dutt observes, that this decline of the Delhi monarchy did not affect the ascendancy of the Muhammadan power. On the contrary, these provincial governors succeeded in forming independent Muhammadan kingdoms in distant provinces, and the rise of these kingdoms meant the further consolidation of the Muhammadan power in the country.

A glance at the political map of India in the year 1450 will show a large number of these petty realms. Beginning from the

Political divisions of India west we have the kingdom of Sind; north of it that of Multan; next the Panjab, nominally a province of Delhi, but actually quite independent of the emperor. Then comes Delhi itself with a

few districts in its immediate neighbourhood which constitute the actual empire of Delhi. To the east and south and running alongside of Delhi lies the kingdom of Jaunpur, while still further eastward is the kingdom of Bengal. This forms what may be called the northern group of Muhammadan states. The second or the southern group comprises the kingdoms of Gujarat and Malwa and the principality of Khandesh. South of Khandesh in the Deccan is the great Bahmani kingdom ruled by its Muhammadan dynasty called the Bahmani dynasty. Thus it will appear from the description given above that Muhammadan power had spread over a large portion of India. There were, however, still some independent zones in which the Hindus retained their independence. In the north there was the Himalayan zone comprising the kingdoms of Kashmir,¹ Nepal, Bhutan and Assam, which, protected by their natural position, continued to be the seats of Hindu kings. Wedged in between the northern and the southern band of Muhammadan states lies what may be called the central zone of Hindu states, running from Rajputana in the west through Gondwana to Orissa in the east. This part of the country was saved from the sweeping conquests of the Sultans partly by the valour of its people and partly by its thick and dense forests which the invading armies of the north found it extremely difficult to penetrate. Lastly, southern India remained virtually independent under Hindu chiefs and kings owing to its remoteness from Delhi and even from the Deccan. It was here that a great Hindu kingdom was founded at Vijayanagar about the year 1336, which not only retained its independence for more than two centuries but prevented the expansion of Muhammadan power further south. From an outline of political divisions given above it will appear that there are two great groups of Muhammadan kingdoms and each group is 'menaced

¹Kashmir was partially conquered by Muhammadans in about A.D. 1340 when a free lance named Shah Amir founded a dynasty of rulers.

on the south by a formidable Hindu polity.' It is this distribution of political forces in the middle of the fifteenth century that contributed a good deal to the making of the India of the sixteenth and subsequent centuries. We propose, therefore, to trace in outline the history of these states which furnished the material with which the Mughals constructed that political edifice which endured for nearly two hundred years.

The province of Sind has, throughout its history, exercised but little influence upon the politics of Hindustan. The first occupation by the Muslims failed and, somewhere about the close of the eighth century, the *Sind* Sumera Rajputs regained the province and maintained their independence for about five hundred years. About the year 1210, Nasir-ud-Din Kabacha subdued the Sumeras and declared himself king of Sind. On his death in A.D. 1227, another local Rajput dynasty known as the Jams of Samana established their independence and continued to rule till the close of the fourteenth century. During this time a few attempts were made by the Sultans of Delhi to invade Sind, but these did not prove very successful. The Jam family, it is said, embraced the Muhammadan faith about A.D. 1380 though for what reason or under what circumstances is not mentioned.¹ The Jams, now Muhammadan by faith, ruled the kingdom until 1520, when it was conquered by Shah Beg Arghun of Kandahar who, being harassed by Babur, had established himself as an independent king at Multan.

Multan, like Sind, fell very early into the hands of the Muslim conquerors of India. Muhammad Kasim gained possession of the city in A.D. 712. The Karmathians then seized Multan towards the end of the tenth *Multan* century and continued to rule the province until they were finally overthrown by Shahab-ud-Din Ghorî. The latter in the course of his expeditions passed several times through Multan and on one occasion is recorded to have 'delivered that place from the hands of the Karmathians.' The history of the province from the time of its occupation by the Muhammadans up to the year 1443 is extremely obscure. It was in this year that tired of anarchy, the people of Multan selected as their ruler 'one Sheikh Yusaf, a man of learning, wisdom and high character' of the tribe of Kuresh, and 'the public prayers were read, and money coined in his name.' The prince fully repaid their confidence by re-organizing the government and gaining the esteem and friendship of the surrounding zamindars. Sheikh Yusaf had hardly been two years on the throne when, in 1445, Rai Sehra, father-in-law of the Sheikh, seized Multan, drove out his son-in-law and assumed the title of

¹ Meadows Taylor, *A Student's Manual of the History of India*, p. 157, reprint 1915.

Kutb-ud-Din Langah. Kutb-ud-Din reigned in peace till his death in 1469. His successors then occupied the throne for nearly fifty years. In 1524 Multan was attacked by Shah Hussain Beg Arghun and the city and the fortress were made to surrender after a prolonged resistance of several weeks.

Jaunpur next demands a word. This kingdom roughly coincided with what is now called Oudh. The city of Jaunpur, was founded by Firuz Shah Tughlak and was so named after his cousin and predecessor Juna, better known as Muhammad Tughlak. This new Muhammadan city was planted in the very midst of the most orthodox Hindu part of Northern India and in course of time grew into the capital of the Muhammadan kingdom of the Sharki Maliks. The founder of this dynasty was the eunuch Malik Sarwar Khwaja Jahan who was appointed in 1394, by Sultan Mahmud Tughlak, as governor of the eastern provinces with the title of Malik-us-Shark. During the confusion that ensued after the invasion of Timur in 1398, Khwaja Jahan's adopted son, Malik Karanfal, seized the opportunity and set himself up as an independent king of Jaunpur with the style of Mubarik Shah Sharki. His short reign of three years ended with his death in 1400. His younger brother, Ibrahim Shah, then succeeded to the throne. He reigned for about forty years from 1400 to 1440 and was the most capable monarch of the Sharki dynasty.

Ibrahim considerably extended his borders by bringing under his sway the adjacent territories of Kanauj, Oudh and Bihar. His long and prosperous reign of forty years is also distinguished by the erection of some of the finest specimens of Muslim architecture such as the Atala Mosque, with which he adorned his capital, Jaunpur.

Ibrahim was a zealous Muslim and an enlightened patron of art and learning and is credited with the opening of several Muhammadan schools and colleges in his kingdom. After him the dynasty rapidly declined as his successor Mahmud Shah yielded to the temptation to take part in the struggle which then centred round the decaying power of Delhi. This legacy he bequeathed to his successors with the result that when Bahlol Khan Lodhi mounted the throne of Delhi, he defeated Hussain Shah, the last of the Sharki kings, in three successive actions near Kanauj (1476) and deprived him of all his possessions. He was allowed to dwell for some years at the capital (Jaunpur) and then fled to Bihar and his kingdom was annexed to Delhi.

The emperors of Delhi never had, for any length of time, an effective control over Bengal. The distance from the capital and, perhaps, the difficulties of the journey prevented the sovereigns of Delhi from reaching the province and subduing a refractory governor.

The province of Bengal, therefore, had been mostly in a state of semi-independence from a comparatively early date. But the province, unfortunately, had no good court historian. Very little is, therefore, recorded of the annals of the numerous rulers who governed the country for a period of three hundred and fifty years before its conquest and annexation by Akbar in 1576.

Within its own borders, however, Bengal was often divided against itself. It had two distinct principalities (the Eastern and the Western) with their capitals respectively at Sonargaon and Satgaon. In about 1339, the governor of Eastern Bengal assumed independence; and a year later the governor of Western Bengal followed his example. Both these principalities were united in 1352 under the rule of Ilyas Khwaja Shams-ud-Din and the capital was fixed at Panduah which a couple of years later was transferred to Gaur. Firuz Shah Tughlak, during his campaign of 1352-53, recognized the independence of Ilyas. The dynasty of Ilyas, known by its popular name as the dynasty of Purbiyas, or Bhangeras, continued to reign till the close of the fourteenth century (1396) when, after a short period of anarchy, the throne came into the possession of a Hindu Raja named Ganesh styled Kans by Muslim historians. But the family of Ganesh did not retain power for long.¹ There were many revolutions and counter revolutions and changes of dynasty, till the government of the country became more stable under its Sayyid rulers. This dynasty was founded in 1493 by Ala-ud-Din Hussain Shah, a Sayyid of Arab descent, who had held the office of wazir under the tyrannical Abyssinian adventurer Muzaffar Shah². Hussain on ascending the throne immediately dismissed the rebellious Abyssinian levies and reigned in peace, prosperity and great splendour till 1518, when he died and was succeeded by his son Nursrat Shah. Both Nusrat and his father Hussain Shah seem to have been rulers of great ability and political foresight. They built up political connections with the neighbouring states and Hussain Shah concluded a treaty of friendship even with the distant ruler of Delhi. Both father and son were great patrons of art and learning and did a great deal for the development of Bengali literature. We learn from Dinesh

¹ During the early years of its conquest by the Muslims, Bengal was not a homogeneous Muslim state. The Hindu landlords and chieftains of the province, who had accepted the suzerainty of the Muslim rulers, were permitted to retain their principalities. Chief among these Hindu states were Vishnupura and Dinajpura. Raja Ganesh belonged to the latter state. The mistake of reading Kans for Ganesh is due to the shikasta style of Persian writing.

² The Abyssinians or African slaves formed a very strong party in the state during the rule of Ruku-ud-Din Barbak Shah (1459-74). He had as many as 8,000 of these slaves in his service and many of them were promoted to high positions in civil and military services of the Government. They eventually usurped the throne in 1486 but could not long retain their ill-gotten power.

Chandra Sen's book on Bengali literature that Nusrat Shah ordered a Bengali version of the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagvata* to be made. To Hussain Shah is attributed the origin of a cult called Satya Pir intended to unite the Hindus and the Muslims in divine worship. His name is still familiar in Bengal.

The province of Gujarat enjoys exceptional natural advantages. Besides the fertility of its soil and a favourable climate, it possesses a long seaboard with many ports, including *Gujarat* Diu, Broach, Cambay, Daman and Chaul. This brought it into relations with Persia, Egypt and Arabia. Naturally, therefore, a country so rich in trade, commerce and manufacture has attracted the attention of all invaders who have effected the conquest of northern India. Its peculiar geographical position beyond the great desert and the hills connecting the Vindyas with the Aravali range made it inaccessible to the invaders from the north and helped the Hindu rulers of the province to preserve their independence for a long time. It was not till 1297, almost a century after the Muhammadans had established their power at Delhi, that an officer of Ala-ud-Din Khalji annexed it to the empire and Gujarat became a Muslim province. From that date Muhammadan governors continued to be appointed from Delhi till a century later Zaffar Khan, son of a Rajput convert to Islam, formally withdrew his allegiance in A.D. 1401 and placed his son, Tatar Khan, on the throne as sultan of Gujarat. This boy, however, died shortly afterwards, and Zaffar, retained in his own hands the reins of administration. Zaffar Khan or Muzaffar Shah I, for such was the title he assumed, died in 1411 and was succeeded by his grandson, Ahmad Shah, who reigned for nearly thirty years and may be regarded as the real founder of the kingdom of Gujarat. For the first few years of his reign, Ahmad Shah was busy in reducing to submission the Hindu rulers of Kathiawar. Their important fortresses of Junagarh (Girnar) and Nagore were conquered in 1414, and a couple of years later the whole peninsula was annexed to the growing kingdom of Gujarat. He had hardly had time to reorganize his army and to consolidate his possessions when he was called upon to defend his territory from the attacks of his Muhammadan neighbours, the Sultans of Malwa and Khandesh. He was successful against both and not only repulsed their joint attack in 1419, but pursued Sultan Hushang of Malwa to his capital at Mandu. Ahmad Shah is also remembered as the builder of a beautiful new city which he named after himself as Ahmadabad and which, to this day, continues to be the capital of Gujarat.

The next important king of the dynasty was Sultan Mahmud Bigarah, a grandson of Ahmad Shah, who reigned for fifty years

from 1459 to 1511. Mahmud was a brave and warlike king and displayed considerable talent in civil government during his long and prosperous reign; and though like Akbar he was only fourteen years of age at the time of his accession, he gave, like the Mughal boy king, evidence of unusual energy by dispensing with a protector and himself suppressing a revolt of his nobles and like Akbar, he also early won the respect of his people.

*Sultan
Mahmud
Bigarah—
King of Gujarat
A.D. 1459-1511.*

The Rajputs of Girnar had again declared their independence and Mahmud was now called upon to oppose a formidable Rajput confederacy. He won brilliant success at Girnar and Champanir, both of which were now permanently annexed to Gujarat.¹ Mahmud's fame reached even beyond India and Shah Ismail of Persia is said to have sent an embassy to his capital at Ahmadabad. His aid was also sought by the Sultan of Turkey for an attack on the Portuguese.

The Portuguese pirates, ever since the discovery of the sea route to India (A.D. 1498), had menaced Indian shipping. The ruler of Gujarat, therefore, was anxious to expel the Portuguese from the Indian waters. A great naval battle was fought between them and the combined troops of Gujarat and the Sultan of Turkey near the island of Diu in A.D. 1508. The Portuguese suffered heavy losses. The son of the Portuguese governor, Almeida, was killed by a cannon ball. Old Almeida swore vengeance and reopened hostilities in the following year. The Gujarat fleet was worsted in the struggle and Sultan Mahmud was compelled to surrender the island of Diu, where the Portuguese then built their first factory (1510).

*War with the
Portuguese,
A.D. 1508-1513*

Mahmud Bigarah died in 1511 in his seventieth year. His reign is still remembered in Gujarat as a golden age. He was succeeded by his eldest son, Muzaffar, who ascended the throne under the title of Muzaffar Shah II. He was unfortunately involved in a disastrous war with Rana Sangram Singh (Rana Sanga) of Mewar, who had expelled the reigning sultan of Malwa and taken possession of his capital Mandu. The war with this powerful head of the Rajput confederacy caused a heavy strain on Muzaffar's military and financial resources and his own illness prevented him from making any impression on his Hindu adversary. He died in February, 1526, the year in which Babur invaded India.

*Muzaffar Shah
of Gujarat*

There was no tract of India except Rajputana where illustrious Hindu chiefs, proud of their ancient lineage, offered a stouter

¹It is, probably, for this reason that he was given the nickname of Bigarah i.e. the conqueror of two *garh* or forts.

resistance to the Muhammadans than the rulers of Malwa; and the annals of the early emperors of *Malwa* Delhi are full of accounts of campaigns in this province. It was brought into subjection by an officer of Ala-ud-Din Khalji, and the old Hindu dynasty disappeared after a hard and almost perpetual struggle of nearly one hundred years.

In 1387 Sultan Firuz Tughlak granted the fief of Malwa to Dilawar Khan Ghorī, a descendant of Shahab-ud-Din, who, with other provincial governors of Delhi, threw off his allegiance to the emperor and became independent during the unsettled period that followed the invasion of Timur. Quickly consolidating his position Dilawar Khan declared himself king in 1401, assumed the ensigns of royalty and had coins struck in his name. He also shifted his capital from Ujjain, the seat of ancient Hindu kings, to the newly built city of Mandu. He was not, however, destined to enjoy his new rank for long, as he died suddenly in 1405. He was succeeded by his son, Alph Khan, who ascended the throne under the title of Sultan Hushang Ghorī. Hushang was early involved in war, as already mentioned, with the neighbouring Muhammadan kingdom of Gujarat and was once even driven out of his capital by Sultan Muzaffar Shah of Gujarat. He died in 1432, but his son and successor, Muhammad Ghorī, proved weak and dissolute and was soon deposed and probably poisoned at the instigation of his minister, who seized the throne and became king with the title of Sultan Mahmud Khilji in 1436.

Hedged in, as it was, by the warring states of Delhi and Jaunpur on the north, Gujarat on the west and the powerful Rajput confederacy on the north-west, the geographical position of Malwa involved the new state in frequent wars with one or the other of its neighbours. For the first few years of his rule Mahmud Khalji succeeded in holding his own against the kings of Gujarat and Jaunpur and Rajputana; but towards the end of his reign, the Rajput confederacy proved irresistible. In 1440 he suffered a heavy defeat at the hands of Rana Kumbha, whose success is recorded in one of the inscriptions found within the lofty tower of victory still standing at Chitor. Mahmud Khalji died in 1469 after a reign of thirty-three years and was succeeded by his son Sultan Mahmud II. The latter also reigned for a period of the same duration as his father but was not half so able or strong. Defeated in a battle by Rana Sanga, he allowed his kingdom to be completely dominated by the Rajputs, chief amongst whom was Medni Rao, the Raja of Chanderi, who acted as chief minister to the Sultan. This state of affairs continued until the invasion of Babur involving the defeat of the Rajputs and the death of Medni Rao relieved Malwa of this Hindu king-maker.

South of Malwa lay the small and comparatively insignificant

kingdom of Khandesh, which became independent under its governor Malik Raja Faruki. An interesting *Khandesh* story of the Malik Raja's rapid rise to favour is related by Muhammadan historians. It is said that King Firuz Tughlak was once separated many miles from his attendants during a hunting expedition and happened to meet Malik Raja, who was, like the king, fond of hunting and a great sportsman. The Malik invited him to a meal which he was preparing consisting of delicious game. Firuz was so pleased with him that he invited him to court and appointed him commander of 2,000 horse and subsequently nominated him to the government of Khandesh in 1370, and also honoured him with the surname of Faruki or the *fortunate*. Having taken possession of his province, Malik Raja speedily reduced some of the Hindu chiefs about him and caused himself to be feared and respected. Following the example of his neighbours, Dilawar Khan of Malwa and Muzaffar Shah of Gujarat, Malik Raja also declared his independence and, with a view to strengthening his political connections, married the daughter of the ruler of Malwa. He ruled his small realm wisely and well for about thirty years till his death in 1399. He was succeeded by his eldest son Malik Nasir who reigned for nearly forty years. Nasir extended his dominions in the north-east by the capture of the fort of Asirgarh, having treacherously taken possession of the person of Raja Asa Ahir. He was tempted to interfere in the politics of the Bahmani kingdom but fared so badly in his wars with the rulers of the south that, after a severe defeat, he died of vexation in September 1437.

The next notable monarch of the Faruki dynasty was Adil Khan who enjoyed a long and prosperous reign of forty-six years, from 1457 to 1503. Except for a short war with Gujarat, Adil Khan's reign was a period of unbroken peace, during which industries in general and that of the manufacture of cloth in particular, flourished under state patronage. Like that of Malwa and Gujarat, the soil of Khandesh is extremely fertile and under the benevolent rule of these Faruki kings large quantities of cotton were grown and the manufacture of fine muslins became one of the staple industries of the province. After Adil Khan's death in 1503, the dynasty of Malik Raja declined and in 1511 Sultan Mahmud Bigarah of Gujarat placed on the throne one of his own relations and a collateral of Adil Khan. The subsequent history of the state is of very little interest for a student of the medieval history of India.

Wedged in between the northern and the southern groups of Muhammadan states was a long belt of Hindu kingdoms beginning from Rajputana in the west and running *Orissa* along Gondwana to Orissa in the east. Orissa did not play a very important part in the politics

of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. A few isolated attempts were made during this period to subdue the Hindu rulers of the province but all proved abortive. In 1457 Hussain Shah, ruler of Jaunpur, invaded the province at the head of a large army numbering about 30,000 horse and 100,000 foot, but considering a permanent occupation of the country as impracticable, the Shah returned after obtaining a large booty. The Bahmani kings also made a few attempts and, in 1477, Muhammad II deprived the Raja of Orissa of a few important possessions like Rajamandri, Kandapali and Kandavid and also levied tribute from the Raja, but it is doubtful whether he ever completely possessed the country.

It has been mentioned in a previous chapter that the Rajput families, not being able to withstand the onset of the Turks and the Afghans, had left their original homes in the Doab between the Jumna and the Ganges and founded new kingdoms in the hilly country all round the Aravali hills. Here they were able to maintain their independence for a few more centuries.

*Rajput States &
their political
geography*

Some of these states were established on the east of the Aravali range and some on its west. Ajmer, Mewar, Amber and Bundi Kotah lie on the east of the range and are watered by the Chambal and its affluents. To the west of the range lie the states of Marwar, Jaissalmer and Bikaner. This region is more of a desert and is watered only by the salt river Luni.

Marwar with its capital at Jodhpur was founded by the grandson of Jai Chandra Rathor of Kanauj. Later in the fifteenth century, a younger branch of the family moved further north and established a separate kingdom of Bikaner. Both these states being in the midst of the desert were almost immune from the intervention of Delhi till the time of Sher Shah Suri. The earlier history of Jaissalmer is rather obscure. Tradition ascribes its beginning to a branch of the descendants of Sri Krishna who migrated here from Dwarka. Except for one invasion of Ala-ud-Din Khalji, the Bhatti rulers of Jaissalmer remained unaffected during the rule of the Delhi Sultans till the time of Akbar. Besides these larger states, there were a few minor ones like Amarkot, Sirshi and Jhalawar whose geographical position kept them beyond the reach of the Delhi Sultans.

On the eastern side of Aravali, the most important kingdoms were Amber, Mewar, and Bundi Kotah. The rulers of Amber (later known as Jaipur State) were the Rajputs of the Kachhwah clan who had migrated from Gwalior.

The Kachhwah rulers were, perhaps, the first to come within the orbit of the Mughal empire, their ruler Raja Baharmal having accepted a *mansab* of 5,000 from Humayun. The Sessodias of Mewar are looked upon as the proudest of the Rajput rulers of Rajasthan. They trace their lineage from the famous Bapa

Rawal who is believed to have checked the tide of the Arab conquest in the eighth century. In their secluded region the descendants of Bapa Rawal remained unaffected by the conquests of the Muslims till Ala-ud-Din sacked Chitor, but they soon recovered their possessions under Rana Hamir. During the period of decline of the Delhi Sultanate, the Ranas of Chitor played a considerable part and Rana Sangram Singh came to be recognised as their leader by the rulers of Jaipur, Jodhpur and other Rajput states.

Another region which afforded shelter to the Rajputs and where they were able to preserve their independence for some time was the rough and hilly tract south of the Jumna comprising Mewat, Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand. It was from their fastnesses in this region (Gwalior, Chanderi, Mahoba, Kalanjar and Kalpi) that they kept up the struggle with the Sultans of Delhi or their provincial governors. The small kingdom of Chanderi rose to some importance under Medni Rao during the period of turmoil after the invasion of Timur.

Another region where the Hindus maintained their independence was the Gondwana situated between Berar on one side and Orissa on the other. This region was subjugated by Akbar.

*The Gond
kingdoms*

NOTES

The most dominant feature of the political history of the country during A.D. 1398-1526 was, as already noticed, the rapid decline of the Delhi empire and the subsequent rise of a number of independent kingdoms on its ruins. Delhi itself was reduced to a very insignificant position and failed to regain its power and prestige in spite of the efforts of its Lodhi rulers. The kingdoms of Bengal, Jaunpur, Sind, Gujarat, Malwa and Khandesh which came into being were all ruled by Muhammadan kings. The decline of the Delhi monarchy, therefore, did not affect the political ascendancy of the Muslims. On the contrary the rise of the new kingdoms meant the further consolidation of the Muhammadan power in the country.

Of these kingdoms, Gujarat, Malwa and Jaunpur have played an important part in history. The Sultans of Gujarat were engaged in naval warfare with the Portuguese who made their appearance on the western coast of India in the closing years of the 15th century. The Sharki rulers of Jaunpur were great patrons of art and learning. Bengal and Sind were little affected by the political currents running across the central regions of northern India.

During the 15th century, political India came to be divided into four well defined zones, viz: the northern belt of Muhammadan kingdoms comprised Sind, Multan, Delhi, Jaunpur and Bengal; the middle belt consisted of Gujarat, Malwa, Khandesh and Bahmani kingdoms. Wedged in between these two groups of Muhammadan powers were Hindu states of Marwar, Mewar, Bundelkhand, Gondwana and Orissa. In the south of the Muslim kingdom of Bahmani was the Hindu kingdom

of Vijayanagar which presented a solid phalanx of opposition to the Muslim advance into the south.

QUESTIONS

1. With the aid of a map, describe the political condition of India about the middle of the 15th century.
2. Give a brief account of either the kingdom of Gujarat or Jaunpur.
3. "The decline of the Delhi Sultanate did not affect the ascendancy of Muhammadan power." Elucidate.

CHAPTER XXI

Southern India

THE BAHMANI KINGDOM, 1347—1518

We now come to the Deccan where the sovereignty of the country was divided between the Muhammadan rulers of the Bahmani kingdom and the Hindu kings of Vijayanagar. Both these kingdoms were founded about the middle of the fourteenth century and it is also a strange coincidence that the decline of the first ruling houses both at Gulbarga and Vijayanagar founded respectively by Zaffar Hassan Bahmani (1347) and Harihar and Bukka (1336), also set in about the same time, namely in the closing decade of the fifteenth century. The provincial governors of the Bahmani kingdom, taking advantage of the feebleness of the sultanate, asserted their independence and one after another set up independent kingdoms (A.D. 1490). Similarly, the first dynasty of Vijayanagar came to a sudden close about the year 1486 when Narsingha Saluva, the powerful governor of Chandragiri, deposed the reigning sovereign and seized the throne. But it must be remembered that in both cases the domination of political forces in their respective territorial limits outlived the first dynasties of rulers. The decline of the house of Hassan Bahmani did not affect the ascendancy of Muhammadan power in the south. On the contrary it meant the further consolidation of the Muhammadan power in as much as the Sultanates of Berar, Ahmadnagar, Bijapur, Golkonda and Bidar, which were formed out of the ruins of the Bahmani kingdom, effectively combined and pooled their resources to continue the old contest with the rival Hindu empire of Vijayanagar, which was now recovering its strength, first under Narsingha Saluva (1486-92) and then under its able ruler Krishna Raya (1509-20). The other characteristic feature of these rival kingdoms of the south was the perpetual contest between them from the date of their foundation to the period of final extinction of one of the rivals, namely, Vijayanagar, in the decisive battle of Talikota (1565). During the first hundred years of their history, this struggle was almost ceaseless and the Muslim and Hindu empires were on the whole equally matched. From the middle of the fifteenth century both parties suffered from exhaustion and occasionally found it convenient to forget their enmity and made some sort of truce.

*Bahmani & the
Vijayanagar
kingdoms—a
comparison*

In the end the Muslims, who were more vigorous, better organized and more persevering than the Hindus, won the long contest.

The chief interest of the story of these two empires of the Deccan does not lie only in their long contest for political supremacy. Trade, industries and commerce flourished in the south during these two hundred years and the country witnessed the execution of quite a large number of architectural works and other specimens of fine art, both in the dominions of the Bahmani kings and at Vijayanagar. We propose, therefore, to give, in this and the following chapter a brief outline of the story of the rise and fall of the Bahmani and the Vijayanagar empires.

Like all the Muhammadan kingdoms of the fifteenth century, the Bahmani kingdom found its origin in a successful revolt

*Founding of
Bahmani
Kingdom*

from Delhi. The story has been already related (P. 301) that the foreign Amirs had elected Ismail Makh as their king at Daulatabad and that Ismail had resigned the royal dignity in favour

of Hassan Gangu, as being the fittest to occupy the throne in such stirring times. Hassan Gangu consequently ascended the throne in Daulatabad in 1347 and assumed the title of Ala-ud-Din Bahman Shah. The dynasty which Hassan founded came to be known after him as the Bahmani dynasty and endured for nearly two hundred years.¹ Until his death in 1358, Ala-ud-Din Hassan was busy in extending his dominion which now comprised a large part of the Deccan stretching from Berar on the north to the river Krishna on the south, and from the ocean on the west to Indore on the east. The capital of the kingdom was at Gulbarga.

Hassan Gangu was 57 years old when he became king, and the ten years of strenuous work as the crowned head of an infant kingdom seriously impaired his health. He died of malaria in

*Muhammad
Shah, Mujahid
and Daud
1358-78*

1358 and was succeeded by his eldest son Muhammad Shah. Muhammad Shah was a great organiser. He perfected the organization of his army and also set up an efficient machinery for the civil government of his dominions. The greatest

part of his reign was spent in fighting with his powerful Hindu neighbours of the kingdoms of Telingana and Vijayanagar. From the account of the details of battles it appears that the parties fought with a vengeance. A very large number of human lives were lost and horrid cruelties were committed on both sides, till the parties realized their folly, stayed the butchery and patched up peace for a little while. Muhammad Shah died after a short but strenuous rule of fifteen

¹The old explanation about the origin of Hassan's surname of Bahmani that he had adopted it in gratitude to his previous master, Gangu Brahman, who had prophesied his greatness, has now been found to be false. It is surmised that this surname of Bahmani was adopted by Hassan as he claimed his descent from Bahman, son of the Persian king Isfandiyar. See also *The Cambridge Shorter History of India* p. 276.

years in 1373, leaving a compact and flourishing kingdom, a full treasury and an immense property in jewels and elephants, with a well equipped army, to his son Mujahid Shah, who succeeded him.

The Bahmani kingdom was divided into four provinces or *tarafs*, namely Gulbarga, Daulatabad, Berar and Bidar. The provincial governors or the *tarafdars* were invested with extensive powers: each commanded the armies of his province and was also made responsible for the civil government of his charge. The system worked well under a king who was powerful to keep his provincial governors under control, but it became a source of serious danger to the kingdom as soon as the kings at Gulbarga became weak. In fact, it was this system of provincial autonomy that ultimately led to the dismemberment of the Bahmani sultanate.

*Administration
of the kingdom*

The central government at Gulbarga was organised by Sultan Muhammad Shah. He instituted a council of eight ministers namely (i) *Vakil-us-Sultanat*, who held the regency when the sovereign was absent from the capital, (ii) *Wazir-i-Kul*, who was supervisor-in-general of all the departments of the state, (iii) *Amir-i-Jumla*, or the minister of revenue and finance, (iv) *Wazir-i-Ashraf* or the foreign minister, (v) *Nazir*, who assisted the finance minister, (vi) *Peshwa*, or the minister who was associated with the first minister and also acted as regent of the state in his absence, (vii) *Kotwal*, or the chief of the police and the magistracy and (viii) *Sadr-i-Sadur*, or the chief justice. This system of divided ministerial authority was subsequently adopted by all the Muhammadan states of Southern India and also by Shivaji after slight modifications.¹

Mujahid, who succeeded his father in 1378, continued the struggle with the rulers of Vijayanagar and invaded and besieged the Hindu capital, but was made to retire after a heavy loss in officers and men, who were made captives and detained at Vijayanagar. On his return to his kingdom, the Shah was assassinated in 1377 at the instigation of his uncle Daud, who seized the throne. But Daud was not destined to enjoy his illgotten power. He had hardly been on the throne for two months when he was murdered by a devoted attendant of Mujahid Shah.²

*Mujahid and
Daud, 137-1378*

Daud's brother Muhammad Shah then ascended the vacant throne and enjoyed a peaceful and comparatively long reign of about twenty years. Muhammad Shah was of a peaceful and virtuous disposition, and during his reign both foreign wars and domestic insurrections were unknown. He died in April, 1397, to the great grief of his subjects and on the day following the

*Muhammad II
Ghiyas-ud-Din
1377-1397*

¹For administrative reforms introduced later by the famous Minister Mahmud Gawan see P. 340.

²This king is said to have been fond of philosophy and poetry. He invited the great poet Hafiz of Shiraz but the latter declined the invitation.

eminent minister Saif-ud-Din, who had so faithfully served the five Bahmani kings, also died at the extraordinary age of 107 years.

The year 1397 witnessed two more kings on the throne of Gulbarga, namely Ghiyas-ud-Din and Shams-ud-Din, both of whom were, however, deposed in turn. Firuz Shah then ascended the throne in the month of November, and restored peace and quiet in the capital. Firuz Shah proved to be one of the ablest rulers of the Bahmani dynasty. In his time the kingdom attained to its highest prosperity. Trade and commerce flourished considerably and the parts of Goa and Chaul were regularly visited by foreign vessels which brought the choicest productions of Europe.

Having firmly established his power, Firuz renewed the wars with Vijayanagar and Telingana and seems to have achieved some success in these operations. At last peace was concluded between Vijayanagar and the Bahmani kingdom, the Hindu Raja having consented to marry his daughter to Firuz Shah and to give away Bunkapur and the western districts of his empire as part of the dowry.¹ The war was renewed in 1419-20 when Firuz endeavoured to possess himself of the fort of Pangal, but this time the Muhammadan forces were worsted in battle and Firuz retired greatly humiliated. His health and intellect were giving way and he died in 1422, a broken old man.² His death was, probably, precipitated by his intemperate living and strenuous exertions. He kept an enormous number of women in his harem and boasted that it contained a representative of every nation on earth, including Europeans, and that he could speak to each lady in her own tongue. Firuz was also fond of building and constructed a fortified palace at Firuzabad on the Bhima and is also said to have adorned Gulbarga with many noble edifices.

Firuz Shah was succeeded by his brother Ahmad Shah who also assumed the title of *wali* or saint. The most important political event of his reign is his war with the rulers of Warangal, which had commenced in the last reign and was continued by Ahmad. The kingdom of Warangal or Telingana, supported by the Raja of Orissa, was a standing menace to the Muslim power both in the east and in the south. Although politically of little importance, the Hindu kingdom of Orissa acted as a barrier, to the eastward expansion of Muslim power

¹In this connection see also P. 347, the episode of Nihal, the Goldsmith's daughter.

²V. Smith, *Oxford History of India*, P. 277 states that Firuz was murdered by his brother Ahmad, who ascended the throne after him in 1422. But we have no convincing proof for such an assertion.

in Bengal, whereas the Hindu rulers of Telingana checked the Bahmani kings from extending their dominions in the south-east towards the sea. Muhammad was now determined to destroy Warangal. He attacked the city, captured its prince, put him to death and annexed his kingdom.

Ahmad Shah changed his capital from Gulbarga to Bidar, the reason assigned for this change being the healthier climate of the new city.¹ He died in 1453 and was succeeded by his eldest son Ala-ud-Din (1435-57). The new Sultan renewed the war with Vijayanagar; but internal troubles prevented his prolonging the struggle and a peace was made with the enemy, though not without some advantage to the Sultan.²

Transfer of capital from Gulbarga to Bidar

The troubles which distracted the civil government of the country were due to a long-standing rivalry, which had considerably increased during Ala-ud-Din's reign, between the "foreigners" and the "Deccanese" nobles of the Sultan. The "Deccanese" consisted of the natives of the south, who allied themselves with the Abyssinian settlers and were mostly Sunnis, while the others, who had come from the north (Turks, Arabs, Persians, and Mughals) and were usually Shias, were regarded by the former as "foreigners." In point of military valour and general political intelligence, the foreigners excelled the Deccanese Muslims and hence they were frequently employed by the local Muhammadan rulers as civil servants and leaders of troops. The Deccanese looked upon these foreigners as usurpers and interlopers and became excessively jealous of them. This jealousy led to bitter feuds between the parties and eventually led to the break up of the Bahmani Sultanate.

The Deccanese and the Foreigners

Ala-ud-Din was followed by his eldest son Humayun (1457-61) who is 'remembered by the epithet of *Zalim* or the tyrant.' He was a terror to all classes of men and it is stated that 'the nobles and generals, when they went to salute the Sultan, used to bid farewell to their wives and children and make their will.' In 1461, when he died, his subjects gave thanksgiving to God, since in His mercy He had delivered them from this tyrant.

Humayun 1457-61

The next important ruler of this dynasty was Muhammad Shah, III, who reigned from 1463 to 1482 and who, during his

¹ Bidar was situated 60 miles north-east of Gulbarga and occupied the site of ancient Vidarbha.

² It is stated by Firishta that the Hindu rulers of Vijayanagar employed during this war Muhammadan mercenary soldiers and that Deva Raya II was so indulgent to the religious feelings of his Muslim soldiers that he erected, for their use, a mosque at his capital.

period of rule, considerably retrieved the falling fortunes of the Bahmani dynasty with the assistance of his capable minister Khwaja Gawan. The Hindu chiefs of Warangal had again gathered strength, and had not only recovered their independence but had advanced in 1461 to within ten miles of the capital, Bidar, during the reign of the minor Nizam Shah (1461-63). The Rajas of Vijayanagar had also seized some portion of the Bahmani dominions during the reign of the last king. These were now recovered by Khwaja Gawan who also reduced the strong fortress of Belgaon and recaptured Goa. But the most remarkable military achievement of Muhammad Shah was his successful raid on the Hindu temple of Conjeeveram, which city, perhaps, had never before been visited by any Muhammadan invader. It is said that the walls and roof of the temple were covered with gold plates and ornamented with precious stones. The Sultan possessed himself of an immense amount of jewels and gold by the capture of the temple.

*Muhammad
Shah III
1463-82*

No account of the reign of Muhammad Shah, however brief, would be complete without a reference to the unjust and unmerited execution of his highly talented old minister Khwaja Gawan. Besides his military achievements, Khwaja Gawan displayed considerable ability in the reforms he carried out in the civil government of the country. These reforms embraced a wide field, covering almost every department of state—finance, justice, army, public education and the assessment of land revenue. By sheer force of ability, Gawan had steadily risen to the post of chief minister and was in the almost exclusive confidence of the Sultan. In his private life, too, Mahmud Gawan was simple, austere, and well-disposed towards the poor. His wants were few, and his time was mostly passed in the company of scholars and divines. Mahmud Gawan's private library at Bidar had a fine collection of 3,000 books and it was here that he would always retire after his day's toil. As administrator, Mahmud Gawan had a very high sense of justice. Though himself a Persian and a 'foreigner,' he scrupulously avoided to identify himself with either party in the state and divided the honours almost evenly between the two factions, viz., the Deccanese and the foreigners. But even such fine traits of character could not shield him from the unmerited jealousy of his rivals and he fell a victim to the intrigues of the Deccanese. A conspiracy was formed against him and a forged treasonable letter bearing the private seal of the minister was placed before the king. 'The besotted Sultan,' says Vincent Smith, 'without taking the slightest trouble to ascertain the facts, ordered the instant execution of his aged and faithful servant.' This lamentable event occurred on April 5, 1481, in the seventy-

*Execution of
Khwaja
Gawan, 1481.*

eighth year of Gawan's age; and 'with him,' remarks Meadows Taylor, 'departed all the cohesion and the power of the great Bahmani kingdom.'

Muhammad Shah himself did not long survive this unjust murder of his minister as he died of fever brought on by his habit of excessive drinking, in March 1482. He was, practically, the last of the Bahmani rulers who retained any real power in his hands, for his son and successor, Mahmud, a boy of twelve years of age at the time of his accession, grew up a 'worthless debauchee.' The provincial governors, one after another, declared their independence and set up their kingdoms at Golkonda, Bijapur, Berar, and Ahmadnagar and the old Sultanate itself was reduced to a small kingdom subsequently known as the Barid Shahi of Bidar. This completes the narrative of the political history of the Bahmani kingdom and an account of the new Sultanates of the south will be given in a later chapter.

*Break up of
the Kingdom*

Meadows Taylor,¹ at the end of his political narrative of the Bahmani kingdom, gives a review of the character of the dynasty and sums up the results of the Muslim rule in the Deccan during 170 years between 1347 and 1518. Mr. Vincent Smith does not entirely agree with him. He rather accuses Taylor of having judged the sultans with 'excessive partiality.'² But one is constrained to remark that Smith's own judgement of the Bahmani rulers is far too severe. With very few honourable exceptions all the Sultans who occupied the throne are considered by Mr. Smith as 'blood-thirsty fanatics' and 'drunken debauchees.' 'Little is recorded about any member of the family,' he observes, 'which is calculated to justify a favourable opinion of his character.' But this does not seem to be the whole truth. Although the record of their early wars against the Hindus of Vijayanagar is a 'mass of sickening horrors' involving wholesale slaughter of defenceless people, yet one finds that the sultans were not altogether inconsiderate to their own Hindu subjects and, when we consider the age in which they flourished, it appears that they governed with moderation. We could not expect them in the fifteenth century to be able to rise to the conception that the ruler of the kingdom should treat all his subjects alike, whether Muslim or Hindu, and afford every man equal facilities in the different departments of life.

*A Resume of
the Bahmani
Dynasty*

We have had occasion to refer in these pages to the names of two very eminent ministers, Saif-ud-Din and Mahmud Gawan, who so ably served the Bahmani Sultans at different periods in the history of the Sultanate. Gawan's name is associated with a number of

Administration

¹ *Manual of the History of India*, pp. 183-86.

² *Oxford History of India*, p. 284.

reforms which he carried out in almost every department of civil government. The department of land revenue is said to have been reorganized by Gawan and he is also said to have substituted cash payment in place of payment in kind of the share due to the state from the land produce. 'Up to the regency of Mahmud Gawan,' observes Meadows Taylor, 'the revenue had been probably raised in kind, on a proportion of the crops, but his system evolved a commutation for money payment upon the value of the land, much on the principle of that afterwards perfected by the Emperor Akbar, and the great Ahmadnagar minister, Malik Ambar.' The Sultans also did much to encourage cultivation; and following the example of the Hindu rulers of Telingana carried out irrigation works on a large scale in their wide dominions especially in the Telugu country. We learn from a Russian merchant of the name of Athanasius Nikitin, who travelled in the Bahmani dominions for a number of years between 1440 and 1474, that the country was well cultivated and there were villages at every *kos*, the roads were well guarded and travelling secure. The lot of the poor people was, of course, unenviable, whilst the nobles of the court were very opulent and indulged in luxury.¹

The new capital, Bidar, is described as noble a city as was the old capital at Gulbarga. The royal palaces were stately and spacious buildings containing lofty halls and apartments furnished with windows and arches of beautiful design and execution. Meadows Taylor speaks very highly of the design and grandeur of the fortresses built by the Bahmani kings and characterizes them as their 'greatest and most indestructible monuments' which perhaps 'far exceed any of the same period in Europe.' The two that are specially mentioned by him as choice specimens of mountain fortresses are those of Gawilgarh and Narnalla, both in Berar.

Although we do not hear of any very celebrated literary production of the period, yet it appears that in respect of education the Bahmani kings were liberal for their time. Provision was made in almost every large village for the education of children, while a small mosque was built and well endowed as a part of the existing village system. The *Mullah* acted both as schoolmaster and priest. In big cities provision was made for higher teaching in Persian and Arabic and these colleges were also richly endowed. The college of Mahmud Gawan in the city of Bidar was, perhaps, the greatest of its kind. It was a spacious two-storeyed building which provided accommodation for a large number of residential students.

Before the establishment of the Bahmani kingdom there was,

¹For administration see also p. 338-39.

probably, no Muhammadan population in the south. The origin of that section of inhabitants, as noted by Meadows Taylor,¹ is mainly a consequence of the Bahmani rule, under which large numbers of Persian, Turk, Arab, and Mughal soldiers and officials settled in the country and intermarried with the native women or took them forcibly as slaves and concubines. It is not improbable, as pointed out by Mr. Smith, that many Hindu families also were forcibly converted, and the continuance of Muslim dynasties in large areas for centuries kept or even increased the proportion of the Muslim minority.

*Muhammadan
population of
the Deccan*

NOTES

Of all the provincial dynasties founded on the ruins of the Delhi empire, that of the Bahmani kings was by far the most powerful. The descendants of Hassan Gangu continued to rule over the vast kingdom for about 135 years, when about 1482 A.D., the provincial governors in Golkonda, Bijapur, Ahmadnagar, and Berar set up their independent governments.

Of the 14 kings of Gangu's line only six died natural death, the rest were either murdered, deposed or succumbed to excessive drinking.

Another feature of the political history of the Bahmani kings is their long-drawn war with their Hindu neighbours of Vijayanagar—the bone of contention between the two being the Krishna-Tungabhadra doab containing the fertile districts of Raichur and Mudgal.

The internal politics of the kingdom were dominated by two rival factions of nobles, viz, the "Deccanese" and the "foreigners" and this fact more than anything else accounts for its ultimate dismemberment. The celebrated statesman Mahmud Gawan became a victim of rival party politics.

However, one redeeming feature of the rule of the Bahmani kings is that arts of peace were not altogether neglected in their dominions. Education and learning, mostly Persian and Arabic flourished and a number of schools and colleges were founded where free education was provided. The Sultans were fond of buildings and many palaces, forts and mosques were erected during their period of rule. Many tanks, reservoirs and canals were also dug for purposes of irrigation.

¹A *Manual of Indian History*, p. 185.

SULTANS OF THE BAHMANI DYNASTY, 1347-1518.

Serial No.	NAME	Date A.D.	REMARKS
1	Ala-ud-Din Hassan Shah	1347-58	Original name Hassan, commonly known as Hassan Gangu Bahmani. Started career as governor of the Deccan in 1343. Died a natural death.

Serial No.	NAME	Date A.D.	REMARKS
2	Muhammad I ..	1358-73	Son of No. 1. almost constantly engaged in war with Hindu kings of Vijayanagar. Died rather early owing to intemperate living.
3	Mujahid Shah ..	1373-77	Son of No. 2. Lived an intemperate life. Murdered by his cousin Daud.
4	Daud Shah ..	1377-77	Grandson of No. 1. Reigned for only forty days. Was assassinated by a slave—a partisan of No. 3.
5	Muhammad II ..	1377-97	Brother of No. 4. A reign of comparative peace. Died a natural death.
6	Ghiyas-ud-Din ..	1397	A boy of seventeen at the time of his accession to the throne. Son of No. 5. Blinded and deposed by his brother Shams - ud - Din. Reigned for about thirty-five days.
7	Shams-ud-Din ..	1397	Brother of No. 6. Reigned for about five months. Blinded and deposed.
8	Firuz Shah ..	1397-1422	Grandson of No. 1. Strangled to death by his brother Ahmad. Possessed an immense harem.
9	Ahmad Shah ..	1422-35	Brother of No. 8. Capital of the empire was changed from Gulbarga to Bidar. Died a natural death.
10	Ala-ud-Din I ..	1435-57	Son of No. 9. Died a natural death.
11	Humayun ..	1457-61	Son of No. 10. Renewed war with Vijayanagar. Probably assassinated.
12	Nizam Shah ..	1461-63	Son of No. 11. minor. Died a natural death.
13	Muhammad Shah III ..	1463-82	Brother of No. 12. Died of intemperance.
14	Mahmud Shah ..	1482-1518	Son of No. 13. Dismemberment of the empire. Died a natural death. The dynasty ceased with him.

QUESTIONS

1. Narrate the events that led to the establishment of the Bahmani kingdom. What led to its subsequent dismemberment?
2. Describe the administrative system set up by the Bahmani kings. What part did the minister Mahmud Gawan play in the improvement of the government of the country?
3. What contributions did the Bahmanide Sultans make to the cultural development of the country during their long period of rule?

CHAPTER XXII

Southern India (*continued*).

VIJAYANAGAR EMPIRE, 1336-1565.

To the south of the Bahmani kingdom lay the great empire of Vijayanagar, which not only checked its southernly expansion, but created 'a solid wall of opposition' and defended the integrity of Hindu India in the south *Introductory* for a long period of about two hundred and fifty years. Mr. Sewell, the great historian of Vijayanagar, is of opinion that the establishment of this kingdom was a measure of self-defence on the part of the Hindus of the south to preserve their religion, culture, and political independence against the ever-advancing tide of Muslim invasions. The way to the south was opened up by Ala-ud-Din Khalji in 1294, when he conquered and captured Deogiri. A few years later the Khalji's celebrated general, Malik Kafur, swept into the Deccan with an immense force and reduced Warangal and Dwarasamudra. In 1318, Sultan Kutb-ud-Din Mubarik of Delhi marched to Deogiri and 'barbarously flayed alive' the Hindu Raja Harpal Deva. Matters became worse for the Deccan with the accession of Muhammad Tughlak (1325). This monarch was determined to make the Deccan an integral part of his vast dominions and accordingly changed his capital from Delhi to Deogiri, which he renamed as 'Daulatabad.' 'Everything, therefore,' observes Mr. Sewell, 'seemed to be leading up to one inevitable end—the ruin and the devastation of the Hindu province, the annihilation of their old royal houses, the destruction of their religion, their temples, their cities. In order, therefore, to save all that they held most dear, the Hindus of the south combined and gathered in haste to the new standard of Vijayanagar, which alone seemed to offer some hope of protection.'

The origin of this great Hindu empire is very obscure. The traditional account, however, attributes it to the efforts of the indefatigable brothers Harihar I and Bukka. Harihar and his brother were, in the service of the Kakatiya ruler of Warangal and fled away *Traditional date of origin* from their country when it was overrun by Muhammad Tughlak in 1323. Harihar, it is said, had the foresight and wisdom to see the dangers resulting from the Muhammadan invasions of the Deccan, and with the help and consultation

of the sage Madhavacharya founded the city of Vijayanagar on the southern banks of the river Tungabhadra in 1336.¹ As a place of shelter and comparative safety the site of the town, was indeed, well selected. The rapidly flowing river served as a moat on one side of the town and the hills of Hemkuta as its ramparts on the other. The building of the town took about eight years and within this period these chiefs were so firmly established in their situation that they could claim control over the whole valley of Tungabhadra, portions of the Konkan and the Malabar coast. Harihar I and Bukka, whose names are prominently mentioned amongst the earliest rulers of Vijayanagar, perhaps never assumed royal rank.

Harihar died in 1343, and after his death the work of extension and consolidation was carried on by his younger brother Bukka.

Progress under Bukka Bukka's task was, to a great extent, facilitated by the final collapse of the ruling house of the Hoysalas. The last noted ruler of this dynasty, Vira Ballala III, was killed in battle with the Muslim rulers of Madura in 1343; and his successor made no efforts to retrieve the fortunes of his house. The kingdom of the Hoysalas was thus within the easy reach of one who was strong enough to seize it. The Sultan of Delhi was involved in serious troubles and was, in fact, already losing his hold on the Deccan. The Sultan of Madura was not so powerful as to deter Bukka Raya from his course of conquest. Bukka thus seized the entire dominions of the now defunct house of the Hoysalas and also destroyed, before he died in 1377, the Muslim Sultanate of Madura. But the greater portion of Bukka's life was spent in waging war against his three contemporary rulers of the Bahmani kingdom, namely Zaffar Khan (Ala-ud-Din I), Muhammad Shah and Mujahid. The bone of contention was the Raichur Doab—a triangle of fertile country lying between the rivers Krishna and Tungabhadra. It contains the fortresses of Mudgal and Raichur, which witnessed many a hard fought combat beneath their walls. But it is unnecessary to repeat the events of the war which have been adverted to in our account of the Bahmani kings. There is no doubt, however, that the extent of the new kingdom of Vijayanagar, and also its wealth, increased considerably during the time of Bukka (1343-77) and that under his successors it became a solid compact empire.

Bukka was succeeded by his son Harihar II, who, as we learn

¹According to Father Heras, the latest writer on the subject, the city was founded by the Hoysala King Vira Ballala III; and Harihar I established his headquarters there. Harihar claimed his descent from the Yadava kings of Deogiri.

from Mr. Sewell, gave himself 'an imperial title under the style of Maharajadhiraj,' and was the first really independent sovereign of Vijayanagar.¹ He ruled from 1377 to 1404 and was a contemporary of the quiet and unassuming Bahmani king, Muhammad II (1377-98). Harihar II had, therefore, not much anxiety from that quarter since the policy of the Bahmani rulers or, more correctly of their minister Saif-ud-Din—who practically controlled the state affairs—was that of peace with his neighbours. Freed from this danger from the north, Harihar II turned his attention to the south where he found a vast field for his ambition. Slowly and gradually he extended his dominion in this direction till it embraced the whole of Mysore, Dharwar, Conjeeveram, Chingalpet and Trichinopoly. The kingdom of Madura had already been conquered and restored to the Pandyas by Harihar's father.

*Expansion
under Harihar
II, 1377-1404*

Towards the close of his reign, however, Harihar was called upon again to defend his dominions against the expanding ambition of the Bahmani Sultan, Firuz Shah, who had ascended the throne of Gulbarga in 1397. The hereditary enmity was reopened and Harihar and his two successors, Bukka II (1404-06) and Deva Raya (1406-10), were engaged in constant fighting against Firuz, who took the field against the Hindus almost every year. One of these wars is known as the 'war of the Goldsmith's Daughter.' A goldsmith of Mudgal had a beautiful daughter named Nihal. She was well trained to dance and sing. Deva Raya, inflamed by the accounts he had heard of her beauty and accomplishments, sent a body of 5,000 horse to seize Nihal. Nihal and her parents fled from Mudgal in time and the infuriated army of Deva Raya plundered the town. Firuz Shah Bahmani then avenged by letting loose his forces on Vijayanagar and forcing Deva Raya to give his daughter in marriage to him—a humiliation which was keenly felt by the Hindus.

*Bukka II and
Deva Raya—
War with the
Bahmani rulers*

The next sovereign of this line of any importance was Deva Raya II, who reigned for twenty-seven years from 1421 to 1448. He was a contemporary of the Bahmani Sultans Ahmad Shah (1422-35) and Ala-ud-Din (1435-57), against whom he was engaged in constant fighting. The Hindus suffered very heavily during these campaigns and Vijayanagar was made to pay tribute to the Bahmani rulers. We are fortunate in possessing an account of the reign of Deva Raya II and a description of the city of Vijayanagar from the pen of two capable travellers namely, Nicolo Conti, an Italian, and Abdur Razzak,

¹ Now that the ancient ruling house of Hoysala and the Sultans of Madura had disappeared from the scene, the rulers of Vijayanagar were justified in assuming the imperial titles.

an Arabian ambassador, who both visited the country during his reign.

The period of forty years following the death of Deva Raya is a very obscure one in the political history of Vijayanagar. It

The Bahmani rulers unable to take advantage of the weakness of the Rayas

was full of confusion and as Vincent Smith observes 'the kings were of little personal merit, palace intrigues were rife and the government was feeble.' It was the right moment, therefore, one might say, for its hereditary enemies from the north to swallow up Vijayanagar.

But fortunately for the Hindus, Gulbarga itself was in too troubled a condition to venture on further military adventures. Humayun, 'the cruel,' had made himself obnoxious to his subjects, who felt great relief at his death in 1461. The Bahmani forces were also otherwise engaged in attempting to reduce the country of the Telugus where they had met with no considerable success. During 1461-63 two kings in succession had ascended the throne in their minority and there were, in consequence, internal disputes and civil wars at Gulbarga. Muhammad Shah (1463-82) made some efforts to improve the situation but the trouble, it seems, had gone too far to permit of any real cure and it ended only with the extinction of the Bahmani monarchy and the establishment of five rival Muhammadan kingdoms in place of one.

To resume our narrative of the Vijayanagar kingdom, the story of these forty years, as already remarked, is very obscure

Narsingha Saluva founds the second dynasty of Vijayanagar rulers 1486

and, when the curtain rises again in 1486, we see a new dynasty in power at Vijayanagar. It was founded by Narsingha Saluva, a powerful feudatory of the Raya and ruler of Chandragiri, who deposed the last imbecile representative of the line of Harihar and Bukka and himself ascended the throne. He was succeeded by his

son in or about 1492, who was deposed and killed by his general, Narasa Nayaka, in 1505.

The greatest monarch of the second or, as is often asserted, of the third dynasty, was Krishna Raya (1509-29). The time

Krishna Raya, 1509-29

had now come for Vijayanagar to recoup itself for the many losses it had suffered. Krishna

Raya's greatest achievement was the recovery from his Muhammadan neighbours of the disputed fortresses of Raichur and Mudgal. These were won in a bloody battle fought on May 19, 1520, between Krishna Raya and Adil Shah of Bijapur, who now took the leading position on the Muslim side.¹

¹The Bahmani Kingdom had already lost its integrity. It came to be divided into five smaller Kingdoms namely, Bijapur, Golkonda, Berar, Ahmadnagar and Bidar.

Krishna Deva Raya is said to have held sway over the whole of south India, i.e., the Madras Presidency including Mysore, Travancore and Cochin and several quasi-independent chiefs were his vassals. He had also cordial relations with the Portuguese governors, Almeida and Albuquerque; and to the latter he sent a message of congratulation on his capture of Goa (1510) from Adil Shah of Bijapur. Krishna Raya took into his service a Portuguese engineer of the name of Joao de la Ponte, with whose help the construction of extensive irrigation works in his empire were carried out.

*Krishna Raya
and the
Portuguese*

The Portuguese speak highly of Krishna Raya, and Domingos Paes especially gives a long and detailed account of the Raya in which he speaks of him as 'a great ruler and a man of much justice.'

Krishna Raya died in 1529, and was succeeded by his brother Achyuta Raya who is spoken of as 'a craven' by Mr. Sewell. He soon lost (1531) the frontier fortresses of Mudgal and Raichur, which his brother had recovered after a hard fight from the ruler of Bijapur. The intrigues of his ministers had weakened the government; so much so that Adil Shah of Bijapur was emboldened to deliver an attack on the capital of Vijayanagar and retired only on receiving a heavy payment by way of tribute.

*Achyuta Raya,
1529-42*

Achyuta died in 1542 after a reign of twelve years, but during this short and weak rule the forces of disintegration made their appearance and the Hindu empire began to fall to pieces. When Sadasiva succeeded his uncle in 1542, the power seems to have passed wholly into the hands of the minister, Rama Raya, and his brothers, Tirmula and Venkatadri. Quarrels among the Muslim states induced Rama Raya to interfere in their affairs and profit by them. In 1543 he joined Ahmadnagar and Golkonda in making a combined attack on Bijapur. Fifteen years later he combined with Bijapur against Ahmadnagar and took the chief part in devastating the territory of Nizam Shah. 'The infidels of Vijayanagar,' writes Firishta, 'who for many years had been wishing for such an event, left no cruelty unpractised. They insulted the honour of the Muslim women, destroyed the mosques, and did not even respect the sacred Koran.' These outrages perpetrated by the Hindu troops caused so much alarm and resentment amongst the Muslims that a movement was immediately set on foot for dropping the private quarrels and combining against the 'arrogant infidels.'

*Confused
politics of the
Deccan*

The movement matured in course of time and the combination

of the four Sultanates—Bijapur, Golkonda, Ahmadnagar, and Bidar, was effected under the leadership of the ruler of Bijapur. Early in January, 1565, the confederate armies assembled at Talikota, a small town in the territory of Bijapur to the north of the river Krishna. The Muhammadan army crossed the river to give battle to the vast Hindu host which had assembled in a plain several miles to the south of that river. It was a memorable battle—to decide, as each party knew, the final supremacy of Hindu or Muslim in southern India—and was well contested on both sides. Rama Raya assembled all the available forces of his dominions and, although Firishta seems to exaggerate the numbers of Hindu troops, it is probable that the army was one of the largest which ever took the field in India. The number of the Muslim troops was far below that of the Hindus. At the first onset of the Hindu cavalry the Muhammadan wings were thrown into confusion but Hussain Nizam Shah, who commanded the artillery part in the centre, soon saved the situation. The guns were loaded with copper coins and opened so destructive a fire that many hundreds of Hindus were soon stretched dead before them. This caused a general panic in the Hindu army and Kishour Khan, a clever and plucky Bijapuri general, taking advantage of the confusion, fell on the flank of the retiring column and completed the rout. Rama Raya was captured and beheaded by the order of Hussain Nizam Shah. It is estimated that the Hindus lost about 100,000 in killed and wounded and the remainder melted away in panic. The city of Vijayanagar was literally deserted. In the words of Mr. Sewell, 'it was not a defeat merely, it was a cataclysm. All hope was gone.' The victorious Muslim army halted for rest and refreshment on the field of battle for two days, and on the third day it reached the capital and for fully five months it plundered and burnt and destroyed. 'With fire and sword,' writes the historian of Vijayanagar, 'with crowbars and axes, it carried on day after day its work of destruction. Never perhaps in the history of the world has such havoc been wrought, and wrought suddenly, on so splendid a city, teeming with a wealthy and industrious population in the full plenitude of prosperity one day, and on the next seized, pillaged and reduced to ruins, amid scenes of savage massacre and horrors beggaring description.'¹

After the decisive battle of Talikota, the Hindu empire of Vijayanagar came to an end after a long and glorious career of two hundred and twenty-five years. The territories of the empire were variously disposed of on its dissolution. The Sultans of Bijapur and Golkonda annexed the districts on their southern borders and

Battle of Talikota and destruction of Vijayanagar, 1565

Effect of the battle

¹Sewell's *A Forgotten Empire*, pp. 206-8. Reprinted, 1924.

CHAPTER XXIII

Government and Society under the Sultans

The form of government that obtained under the Sultans of Delhi was autocratic. The Sultan's will was absolute. All authority centred in him. The times were such that it could not be otherwise. The hostility of the Hindu states within the empire and the pressure of the Mongol invaders from outside made it necessary for a successful Sultan to exercise despotic powers. The feudal nobles and the revenue farmers would invariably rack-rent the poor cultivator under a weak Sultan. The bulk of the people, therefore, looked upon a strong monarch as a shield against the oppressive officials and would give him their full support. Again, the frequent changes in the office of kingship and the notoriously unstable character of the Sultana rendered it essential that the Sultan had to be a strong and resourceful man, otherwise he could have easily been dethroned. A strong and centralized monarchy in that age, was, perhaps, a necessity. Even in Europe the ruling heads of states, in that age, were no better than despots.

*Centralized
Monarchy*

In theory, no doubt, a Muslim monarch was expected to administer civil law in accordance with the dictates of Shariat and was, therefore, required to be guided by the Ulemas or the Muslim doctors of divinity, but there was no means of enforcing the decisions of these theologians on an unwilling emperor.

*Checks on the
power of the
Sultan*

There were no parliaments, councils, and cabinets which, as representatives of the people, would put a curb on the exercise of the despotic authority of the Sultan. A strong autocrat like Ala-ud-Din, for instance, would not allow the opinions of the Ulemas to hamper his will. Muhammad Tughlak often overruled the decisions of the Qazis and the Mullas. Balban put forward the view that the Sultan was the vicar of God and Muhammad Tughlak got his coins stamped with such homilies as "the Sultan is the Shadow of God," "he who obeys the Sultan truly obeys God," etc. The only effective danger which an autocratic Sultan dreaded if he exceeded the limits was a revolt from his oppressed people or a conspiracy from his disaffected nobles.

There was no fixed law to govern the succession to the throne. Ordinarily the claims of the eldest son of the late king were recognized, but there was nothing either by way of tradition or convention to prevent a junior member of the family from trying his luck if he was

*Law of
Succession*

strong and resourceful. Sometimes the preceding king would nominate his successor. The nomination, no doubt, carried weight and gave initial advantage to a candidate but it was not always a deciding factor in the question of succession. The nomination of a minor or clearly unfit person was not always carried out. Iltutmish's nomination of Raziya was accepted but not that of Balban in favour of his grandson Kai Khusrau or that of Ala-ud-Din in favour of his infant son Shahab-ud-Din (Omar).

The succession was sometimes affected by means of an election conducted by the chief officers of the state and the person chosen to be the king was not necessarily a direct descendant of the late king. The founder of the Khalji dynasty was, in no way connected with the last king of the slave dynasty nor was the last of the Khaljis related to the Tughlaks. This absence of a recognized law or a fixed practice to govern succession, perhaps, more than anything else explains frequent military revolutions and changes of rulers during the period of the Sultanate.

As we have remarked before, the character of the administration of the Sultans was essentially military. The civil organization, such as we have described above, was devised only to meet the requirements of the daily routine of administration. We do not hear of any large administrative units such as the *Subahs* or governorships of Akbar's times, nor do we come across any reference to a well organized system of assessment of land or that of the collection of revenues which we find elaborately treated in the *Ain* of Abul Fazl. On the other hand, the methods of administration of these early kings were rather rude and oppressive. The whole empire was parcelled out into a large number of military Jagirs, each of which was placed under a feudal baron bearing the title of Malik or Amir. These Maliks wielded extensive powers within their jurisdiction. Besides, they had large standing armies of their own. It is obvious, therefore, that such a system of government was, by its nature suicidal to the integrity of the empire. An ambitious and powerful governor, with all the material and military resources of the province at his command, would often look upon the throne of Delhi as the ultimate goal of his ambition. And indeed, during the three hundred years of the life of the empire, as mentioned above, the dynastic changes at Delhi were frequently the result of such an unbridled ambition. Jalal-ud-Din Khalji, Ghazi Khan Tughlak and Bahlol Khan Lodhi—all of whom founded new dynasties—had been provincial governors before their accession to the throne of Delhi.

There is, however, one redeeming feature of the rule of these Sultans and that is they did not disturb the ancient local

institutions of the people. The village with its autonomous government remained untouched. The officers of the state did not interfere in the normal course of the life of the people nor was it affected, to any appreciable degree, by the revolutions and civil wars at Delhi. The village republics were left independent in the management of their own affairs, they regulated the distribution of lands, settled local disputes, collected taxes and transmitted them to government treasury.

*The village
autonomy*

It is but natural that the permanent establishment of their political power in the country should have contributed a good deal to the spread of the religious faith of the Muhammadans. The number of the followers of Islam multiplied rapidly during the first three hundred years of their rule. It is not correct to say that the conquerors made any wholesale conversions at the point of the sword. There are instances, where an individual, a governor of the province or even an emperor himself, was excessively partial to his Muhammadan subjects and forbade the Hindu population to carry on their religious duties in public. One thing, indeed, that was regularly enforced against the non-Muslims and had a sort of official sanction behind it was the exaction of the *Jizya* from them. The Hindu population was offered the choice between conversion or the payment of the poll-tax and it can be readily understood that, forced by economic pressure, quite a large number of the Hindus from amongst the poorer classes¹ preferred to embrace Islam and be exempted from the payment of the *Jizya*.

*The spread
of Islam*

But there were other important factors than this buying of conversions which equally operated in increasing the number of Muslims in the country. These were the immigration or the fresh recruitment from beyond the north-western frontier and the comparative fertility of the Muslims who, as it is believed, multiply more rapidly than the Hindus. All these causes combine to explain the large proportion of Muslims in the population of those parts of India which came under the direct rule of the Delhi Sultanate. Outside its limits, in such provinces as, for example, Rajputana, Bundelkhand and Mysore, where the old Hindu ruling houses continued to exist in full or semi-independence, the religious and social state of the people remained practically the same as before the Muhammadan conquest.

The work of routine administration was divided into five main

¹When this choice was offered by Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlak, he writes in his Memoirs, 'great numbers of Hindus presented, and were admitted to the honour of Islam. Thus they came forward day by day from every quarter and, adopting the faith, were exempted from the *Jizya*, and were favoured with presents and honours.'

departments each of which was placed in the charge of a minister of the state. These were : Revenue, War, Local and Provincial government, Markets and Agriculture and the Justice. The *Diwan-i-Hazara* for Revenue minister controlled and supervised the work of the *amils* or tax-collectors and determined the share of the state in the produce. The minister in charge of the department of war looked after the recruitment of the army, arranged for the annual muster of the feudal contingents and was expected to organize the transport and commissariat when the army took the field. The minor function of the minister in charge of the provincial government was to keep in touch with the governors of the districts and provinces, receive their communications, place them before the Sultan and take orders thereon. The minister in charge of the markets, etc. issued licenses to traders and businessmen, collected through his subordinates the octroi duties and dealt with famine and other cognate questions. The minister of justice supervised the work of the Qazis and other officers connected with the department of justice.

The Muslims, no doubt, formed the favoured class. The state taxes imposed upon them were lighter than those levied upon the Hindus; and the admission to government service was much easier for the favoured children of the state than for the members of other communities. Besides, the Hindus also suffered from religious disabilities. Kings like Firuz Tughlak and Sikandar Lodhi had prohibited the Hindus from public worship and building of their temples. With the loss of political power, the Hindu talent naturally became stunted and dwarfed and got little or no opportunity of showing itself in the sphere of politics. But the Hindu genius, it appears, found another channel for its outlet. We come across a larger number of Hindu saints and reformers in different parts of India whose ethical, moral and spiritual teachings moulded almost the entire tone of society.

The Muslim nobility comprised several racial and clannish elements. During the rule of the slave dynasty the Turks were more predominant than others. The Khaljis in their turn favoured the Afghans; and the Tughlaks, (Muhammad Tughlak in particular) were suspicious of both and took large numbers of Mongols and other foreigners into their service. Some of the Hindu converts like Malik Kafur, Khusrau Khan and Khan-i-Jahan Makbul were also enrolled among the Muslim nobility.

The lower classes among the Muslims were, however, not very much better off than the Hindus of similar social status. They were ignorant and superstitious. The average Hindu convert neither changed his occupation nor his old social environments.

Ibn Batuta, in his narrative, writes a good deal about the social customs and manners of the time. Slavery was common

and to keep slaves (boys and girls) was a recognised fashion of the time. The practice of *satti* was in vogue among the Hindus. But during and after the days of Muhammad Tughlak, it appears, the state began to interfere and the woman who wanted to be burned with her dead husband had to obtain the king's permission. The liberty of women was increasingly restricted and seclusion was enjoined upon them.

Gambling and wine-drinking seem to have been the common vices of the age. To check the excess of these and other objectionable luxuries indulged in by the people, Balban and Ala-ud-Din Khalji issued several edicts. The latter, as we know forbade even frequent social intercourse among his nobles. The Tughlak kings were free from these common vices of the age.

Balban took drastic measures to put down the bandits and highway robbers and made the roads safe for travellers and caravans of merchant. Ala-ud-Din Khalji maintained Balban's policy in this respect. But the most remarkable achievements of Ala-ud-Din in the sphere of economics was his Tariff legislation by which he regulated the prices of articles of daily consumption and added to the peace and happiness of the average man. The country was visited by a severe and prolonged famine during the rule of Muhammad Tughlak but the Sultan did his best to alleviate the sufferings of the people. He threw open the state granaries for the public and advanced as much as 70 lakhs of *tankas* to the agriculturists by way of *tagavi*. Firuz Shah's irrigation works proved a boon for the agricultural prosperity of the country. Trade and commerce also flourished under the Sultans of Delhi. Gujarat is described as a rich and populous country and its people rolling in wealth. Marco Polo speaks of extensive cotton fields in Gujarat and Malwa and the industries connected with silk and cotton. Similarly Bengal and the Doab are described by Ibn Batuta as very fertile provinces. The port of Cambay is described as a great centre of trade where indigo was produced in abundance. The economic prosperity remained at a high-level during the reign of Firuz Tughlak.

Unlike their predecessors the Indo-Bactrians, the Sakas, the Huns and others, the Muhammadans were not absorbed into its fold by the elastic and ever-expanding Hinduism. The reason obviously was that a Muhammadan had a more definite and intelligible religion. He believed with all his heart in the infallibility of the Koran and had an unshakable faith in his Prophet and in the oneness of God. As such he, perhaps, considered his religion in no way inferior to that of the Brahmins who, at that time, worshipped many gods with their idols and ceremonies. The early invaders like the Sakas and the Huns had no such definite religion which could protect them against the more definite religion of the Hindus.

*Contact of
Hinduism and
Islam*

and consequently, when they settled in the country and married Hindu women, they were rapidly absorbed into the Hindu caste system.

The two religious systems thus maintained their individuality but, since the adherents of the two faiths lived as neighbours and came into close contact with each other, some sort of change was bound to come over both. Besides this contact and occasional exchange of ideas between the votaries of the two faiths, there were also other influences at work which brought about some sort of reconciliation between Islam and Hinduism. The influence of Hindu women in Muslim harems must be counted as one of the chief. 'The traditional devotion and the tenderness of Indian motherhood,' observes Mr. Havell, 'helped greatly to soften the ferocity of the Turki and Mughal nomad.' The Hindu converts, who were forced for economic reasons to adopt Islam, formed a distinct class by themselves. They had, perhaps, never understood the real meanings of the *gayatri* or the Sanskrit formula of the daily prayers of the Hindus, nor, after their conversion to Islam did they care to grasp the significance of the *Kalima* or the creed of the Muslim faith. They now resorted to a mosque as often, or as occasionally, as they used to go to a Hindu temple to satisfy their spiritual cravings; and in place of a Brahmin minister they now invited a member of the Muslim faith to conduct their religious ceremonies.¹

There was no real change of heart. Their conversion was a mere substitution of one lifeless link for another in the chain of their religious ideals. These nominally converted Hindus, in fact, retained most of their old habits, occupations and social connections and thus exercised a silent influence in bringing about some understanding between their old and new professions of faith. Frequent revolutions, civil wars and foreign invasions were other important factors which contributed, in a degree, to the same end. It must be remembered that, during their invasions, the Turkish or the Mongol soldiers by no means always spared the life and property of their co-religionists and the sufferings which fell equally upon all members of society, whether Hindus or Muslims, stirred deeply the spiritual feelings of the people. 'Men and women of all castes,' observes Mr. Havell, 'who had suffered as much as human nature could endure felt drawn together in a common bond of sympathy.' These, amongst others, were the chief social, moral and political forces working silently but steadily during this period for a '*modus vivendi*, if not for complete reconciliation between Islam and Hinduism.' On the propaganda side of the question, the influence

¹In certain cases, the Brahmin minister was also present with the Muslim Mullah and even now in certain Hindu families, the fees on such ceremonial occasions are divided between the ministers of the two faiths.

of the Muslim Sufi, however, cannot be ignored. He derided the ritualistic side of his religion and his teachings—that salvation was a concern for all, and that before God's throne there was no difference between the high-born and the low, between a Muslim and a Hindu—had a closer kinship with the Hindu revivalists of the age than with the 'stiff-necked mullah' of the Sultan's court. Thus a sympathetic frame of mind was created which greatly assisted the other forces that were steadily working to bring about a better understanding between the two peoples.

We have had occasion to remark, in these pages, that Hinduism, during its prolonged struggle with Buddhism, had received such accretions as it could never subsequently shake off. It had adopted the doctrine of incarnation and had become idolatrous. The old Hindu belief in the oneness of God gave place, in the popular mind, to the faith in the plurality of gods. It had lost its spiritual character and was reduced to a mere mass of superstitions and unmeaning ceremonies. It was in this condition of spiritual stagnation that Hinduism came in contact with Islam in the eleventh century. The impact of Islam certainly stirred it from its deep slumber and a period of Hindu revival began, which had a far-reaching effect on Hindu thought. A new school of spiritual thought sprang up and in the course of a few centuries it swept all over the country. This school was known by the name of the Bhakti school and the creed of the school was the creed of *bhakti* or single-minded devotion or love to the One. As we shall presently see, the teachers of the Bhakti cult seem to have been strongly impressed with the monotheistic faith of Islam. *Ram* and *Rahim*, *Kuran* and *Puran*, *Veda* and *Kiteb*,¹ very often go together in the devotional songs and moral maxims uttered by these teachers and reveal how Hinduism and Islam reacted one upon the other during the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This teaching is the most distinct mark of the doctrines of Ramananda, Kabir, Dadu, Ram Das, Surdas, Nanak and Chaitanya, who flourished in different parts of northern, eastern and western India.

The earliest teacher, whose doctrine was the basis of the Bhakti school, was Ramanuja who lived in the twelfth century and preached the unity of God under the name of Vishnu in southern India. He proclaimed that the love of God was the only way to salvation.

It is said that the ruler of the Chola kingdom was a follower of Shiva and Ramanuja had therefore to leave his kingdom for Mysore where he received converts from all classes of the people. Before he died, Ramanuja succeeded

*Religious
revival—the
Bhakti cult*

*Ramanuja and
Ramananda*

¹*Kiteb* or *Kilab* stands for the Book the Koran or the Bib;

in establishing about 700 Vaishnava monasteries. The next famous Vaishnavite teacher, about whom we have some information, was the great Ramananda—fifth in the apostolic succession from Ramanuja. He flourished, probably in the fourteenth century and did a good deal of itinerant preaching but eventually settled in Benares. He preached in Northern India the same ennobling doctrine and faith under the name Rama, which his worthy teacher Ramanuja had done in the south under the name of Vishnu. He broke away entirely from the caste rules hitherto imposed by Brahmin schools, and admitted into his order people of all castes. He is said to have had twelve *chelas* or chief disciples who included a Brahmin, a Rajput, a barber, a chamar (*currier*) and a Muhammadan weaver, namely Kabir. He preached and wrote in Hindi, the language of the people of Northern India. Ramananda died about 1411,¹ and had probably lived through all the stormy period of the Tughlak Sultans.

Perhaps the most famous disciple of Ramananda was Kabir who like his master preached his gospel of love under the name of Ramchandra. Like his master again, Kabir also preached in the language of the people, but he went further than his master in his denunciation of idolatry and of Brahmin rites and ceremonies. Kabir laid great emphasis on the equality of man and declared that before God's high throne all were equal, highborn and lowborn, Muslims and Brahmins. He conceived the lofty ideal of effecting a reconciliation between Islam and Hinduism. 'The city of the Hindu God,' he said, 'is in the east (Benares), and the city of the Muslim God is in the west (Mecca), but search your heart, and there you will find the God both of the Hindus and the Muhammadans.' 'If the creator dwells in tabernacles, whose dwelling is the universe?' Kabir never aimed at founding a sect; but his followers soon formed themselves into a sect, and are known as the Kabirpanthis. They are still numerous in Central India, Gujarat and the Deccan.²

We have had occasion to remark in connection with the history of Bengal that the two local rulers, Hussain Shah and his son Nusrat Shah, had, by their liberal policy, created in that province an atmosphere of religious toleration towards the close of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century. It was in this atmosphere that Chaitanya Swami was born in Nudiah (Nuddea) in A.D. 1485 and preached in Bengal and Orissa the religion of one God under the name of Krishna. He, too, preached that salvation

¹Some writers put him down between A.D. 1400-1470.

²Kabir's date has been fixed for A.D. 1440-1518. He was a contemporary of Sultan Sikandar Lodhi who banished him from Benares for his views. Some of Kabir's verses have been incorporated in the Granth Sahib.

was a concern for all and invited Muhammadans to join his sect. Like his predecessors, Chaitanya also laid stress upon perfect devotion to God as the only way to salvation. Chaitanya wielded very great influence in Bengal and his name is a household word in that province. Millions of men, even to-day, worship him as the incarnation of Sri Krishna.


Another famous teacher of the Krishna cult was Swami Vallabhacharya. He was born in 1479 in the Telugu country in the South. He did itinerary preaching and visited Mathura and Brindaban, the spots associated with the early scenes of Lord Krishna's life and eventually settled in Benares where he wrote his philosophical works.

*Vallabha
Swami*


Amongst the devotees of the Krishna cult, the name of Mira Bai of Rajputana deserves a prominent mention. The details of her life are shrouded in mystery. The accepted date, however, places Mira Bai in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. Some of Mira Bai's lyrics in the Braj Bhasha are the finest specimens of Hindi poetry.

Mira Bai

The *bhakti* movement was not confined to any one quarter of India but it spread, like a great ocean wave, to the three corners of this triangular peninsula. Almost contemporaneous with other great reformers of the country Guru Nanak was born in 1469 at Talwandi in the Panjab. He preached the same monotheism and conceived the same great idea of bringing about a compromise between Islam and Hinduism by uniting the followers of the two faiths in the worship of one God.¹

Nanak 

Later than Nanak and Chaitanya, Dadu was born in Ahmabad (Gujarat) in 1544. Like Kabir and others Dadu raised his strong voice against idol worship and the popular practice of worshipping at the shrines of the departed saints. Dadu was a great poet and like the preceding teachers of the *bhakti* cult composed his verses in the language of the country where he lived. He has left a quantity of sacred poetry which is held in great veneration throughout western India even to-day. Amongst Dadu's chief disciples may be mentioned the names of Garib Das and Madho Das, who spread their master's creed in Ajmer and other big cities of Rajputana.

Dadu 

This same influence was at work, perhaps with greater effect, on the popular mind in Maharashtra, where preachers, both Brahmins and non-Brahmins, were calling on people to identify *Ram* and *Rahim* and ensure their freedom from the bonds of formal ritualism and caste distinctions and unite in the common love of

*Namdev and
Tuka Ram*

¹A fuller account of Guru Nanak's teachings will be found in a later chapter in connection with the history of the Sikhs.

man and faith in one God. Amongst the earliest teachers of the *bhakti* cult in Maharashtra should be mentioned the name of Swami Namdeva, who flourished in the fifteenth century. During the fifteenth, sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries this work was carried on by Shridhar, Tuka Ram, Ram Das and others, a detailed account of whose lives and teachings cannot be given within the compass of this volume. Suffice it to say that their work operated most powerfully in the building up of a united Maratha people and formed the background for the great work of Shivaji.

To recapitulate, therefore, some of the leading features of the Bhakti movement were: a singleminded devotion to God whether

Effect of the movement on social and political life of the country He was worshipped under the name of Vishnu, Rama, Krishna, or Allah; a strong voice of protest sometimes assuming even an iconoclastic tone against the worship of images and undue importance of ceremonies and ritual; and an unceasing attack on the spirit of exclusiveness of

the caste system. The essential character of the movement was that it was intended for the spiritual elevation of the masses and all the reformers, therefore, preached in the language of the common people. The cumulative effect of the labours of a succession of saints and reformers was that an atmosphere of good will and toleration was created; and it was in this atmosphere that the foundations of the Mughal rule were laid in the country during the opening years of the sixteenth century. The Bhakti cult, no doubt, played an important part in determining the religious and political policy of the earlier Mughal monarchs to which a reference will be made in a later chapter of this book.

The leaders of the *bhakti* movement made valuable contributions to the regional literature, and their works were widely

Regional Literature of India studied by their followers. Before their time great literary works were composed in Sanskrit, but these teachers, as stated before, taught and wrote in the language of the people. They

composed their devotional songs and moral maxims in the spoken language and, when these were reduced to writing, the body of the regional literature of the country received a considerable accession. The great Jain and Buddhist writers in the eleventh and twelfth centuries produced a mass of beautiful literature in the Tamil language and the *Chintamani*, a romantic epic of 15,000 lines, may be mentioned as a fair specimen of this class of compositions. In Maharashtra also Marathi literature was developed during the period as the result of the compositions of the Maratha poets.

Nor was Northern India slow to follow the lead of the Deccan and Southern India. The culture of the Hindi language followed

close upon the culture of Tamil. The poet, Chand Bardai, of the court of Prithviraja made a beginning in this direction. His great epic *the Prithviraj Raso* is, so far as present researches go, admittedly the most ancient work of Hindi literature. *The Gita Govinda* of Jayadeva, probably written in the twelfth century A.D., is another excellent specimen of lyrical poetry. In subsequent centuries, as said before, the religious movement led by Ramananda and Kabir led to the composition of a vast mass of sacred Hindi literature, while Rajputana was rich in heroic ballads and poetry connected with the deeds of Rajput chiefs.

In Bihar and Bengal also it is the religious songs that mark the beginning of the growth of regional literature. Vidyapati, who lived at the court of Shiva Singh of Tirhut, and the well-known Brahmin poet Chandi Das of Bengal composed in the fourteenth century those touching songs about Krishna and his spouse Radha which mark the commencement of Bengali literature in Bengal. More serious compositions followed, when Krittivasa (born 1346) translated the *Ramayana* into Bengali. A Bengali version of the great Mahabharata was also prepared by the order of Nusrat Shah (1518-32).

Persian literature flourished remarkably under the patronage of the Sultans of Delhi. Amir Khusrau, and Mir Hasan Dehlavi who enjoyed the patronage of the Khalji and Tughlak rulers were poets of great repute. Among the great historians of the period may be remembered Zia-ud-Din Barani, Shams-i-Siraj Afif and Minhaj-ud-din Siraj who were the main sources of information for later writers. Of the provincial seats of Persian and Arabic learning in Northern India, the most famous was Jaunpur. Ibrahim Shah Sharqi was a generous patron of literary men. Several works on philosophy, theology and jurisprudence were written during his reign.

Several Muslim scholars read Sanskrit and made use of literary and scientific works in that language. Albiruni translated a number of Sanskrit books into Arabic dealing with philosophy and astronomy. The *Dalayal-i-Firuzshahi* is a free translation of a Sanskrit book which was seized from the library of Nagarkot by Sultan Firuz Tughlak. Again, a Sanskrit medical treatise was translated into Persian by the order of Sultan Sikandar Lodhi.

It cannot be said with any amount of certainty when the rise of the Urdu language took place. But it seems very probable, as has been suggested by various writers on the subject, that this mixed language was originally formed as a convenient compromise between the languages of the rulers and the ruled. It was then as its name signifies,¹ at first a camp jargon formed by a mixture

*Persian and
Arabic
literature*

*Evolution of
Urdu*

¹Urdu is derived from the Turki word *Urdu*, 'camp,' the original form of the English word 'horde.'

of Persian, Arabic and Turki with Hindi, the local language of Delhi. Gradually, however, through the writings of the court poets and historians it developed a literary form. Quite a large number of Hindi words occur in the writings of Amir Khusrau and Malik Muhammad of Jais, who flourished in the time of Humayun and even wrote in Hindi.

Among other effects of the collapse of Hindu political power must be noticed the intellectual stagnation which characterized Brahminism after the beginning of the twelfth century. The royal patronage having been stopped, scientific research came to a standstill. *Decay of Hindu philosophy* 'Brahmin astronomers, mathematicians, chemists and other investigators,' remarks Mr. Havell, 'stopped at the results already reached.' But in southern India things were different. There the Sanskrit learning was not neglected as it was in the north. It had rather received a fresh impetus from the presence of the learned scholars of the north, who had fled to the Deccan during the course of Muhammadan invasions of Northern India. In the extreme south, in the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar, beyond the depressing influences of the Muhammadan domination, Hinduism still showed some signs of vigorous life; and a very advanced school of Sanskrit learning was founded by the famous brothers Madhava and Sayana, who composed the great commentaries of the Vedas and other ancient works, which are still considered authoritative all over India. To Southern India also belongs the credit of producing the first modern reformer in Ramanuja, who lived there in the twelfth century and from whom were spiritually descended Ramananda in the fourteenth and Vidya-pati and Chaitanya in the fifteenth centuries—the great apostles of Vaishnavism about whom we have already spoken at some length.

If Islam in earlier centuries of its rule did not make any considerable original contributions to Indian philosophy or psycho-logical study, it at least provided great opportunities to Indian builders and craftsmen to show their skill and develop it further by providing them with 'new problems of construction and design.' *Buildings and architecture* The architectural works of the period accordingly show a fine blend of the Saracenic and the Hindu styles.

Some of the most beautiful architectural monuments of India were erected during the Sultanate period. About the year 1235, the famous Kutb Minar near Delhi was built by Iltutmish¹ in memory of the Muslim saint Kutb-ud-Din. Though most of his time was spent in wars, Ala-ud-Din Khalji ordered the construction of several forts and palaces. The fort of Siri near Delhi

¹There is a great difference of opinion among historians as to whether the building of the minar was commenced in the reign of Aibak or Iltutmish.

and the Alai Darwaza were marked by much magnificence and solidity. These are, in fact, regarded as 'one of the most treasured gems of Islamic architecture in India.' Muhammad Tughlak did not find much leisure to attend to the work of building, but his successor Firuz Shah was a magnificent builder, who spent vast sums of money on the construction of towns, palaces, mosques, tanks and gardens. Besides the Sultans of Delhi, the rulers of the provinces also contributed a good deal in this direction. The Sharki kings of Jaunpur are famous for the architectural works executed by them and the beautiful Atala Mosque in the city of Jaunpur may be mentioned as a fair specimen of the architectural monuments of their rule. Mandu, the ancient capital of Malwa, has some beautiful ruins of the fifteenth century, of which the style is similar to that of the contemporary period in Delhi. Ahmadabad, the capital of Gujarat, has a beautiful Jama Masjid built by the founder of the city, Ahmad Shah, in about 1424. It was not only in Northern India that art made progress, but in the Deccan also it received encouragement from the Bahmani and Vijayanagar kings a brief account of which has already been given in previous chapters.

NOTES

(A) (i) The government under the Sultans of Delhi was autocratic. People had no voice in determining the mode of administration. There were no parliaments, no councils and no cabinets. The ministers of the Sultan, too, had only advisory functions. The Sultan had absolute powers. The times were such that it could not be otherwise. (ii) The day to day work of administration was carried on by the ministers each of whom had a large staff of secretaries and clerks. (iii) The chief source of income of the state was the land and the produce from the land was divided between the state and tillers of the soil. The share of the state varied at different times and under different rulers. It ranged from 33 per cent. to 50 per cent. of the total produce. The actual collection on behalf of the state was made by village officers: Chawdharis, Muqaddams and Khots. Their services were rewarded by special concessions in the form of revenue-free grants. Sometimes the state did not deal with the tillers of the soil at all. The land was given away on contract to farmers or Ijaradars who stipulated to pay a specified sum to the government and collected what they could from the ryots. This system had its attendant evils. The contractors had no sympathy with the cultivators whom they used to rob of everything they could. The state did not gain either. The contractors were often in arrears.

(B) The general condition of the masses was nothing enviable. They were illiterate, ignorant and superstitious. There was no arrangement for education on a large scale, no satisfactory means of communication in the country. Nor was travelling safe from bandits and highway robbers.

(C) The most significant phenomenon in the politico-social history of this period, however, is the impact of Hindu and Muslim civilizations

and its resultants. The Muslim conquerors brought with them definite social and religious ideas which differed fundamentally from those of the Hindus. But long association brought the followers of the two faiths closer and closer and they began to appreciate each other's point of view and find a *via media*, as it were. The reaction of Islam on Hinduism appears to have been twofold. The conservative thinkers in Hindu society tried to fortify their social and religious systems by introducing elaborate and rigid set of caste rules, whereas the more liberal-minded reformers accepted some of the democratic principles of Islam. The latter class found able exponents of their views in a number of saintly teachers like Ramananda, Kabir, Nanak and Chaitanya who conveyed their message to the unlettered masses. They all urged that God is one and that He is the God of Hindus as well as of Muslims. God, they preached, judged every one by his deeds and not by his birth. (For a fuller account of this reaction and the teachings of the reformers see pp. 363-66).

(D) Another important feature of the history of the period is the development of regional literature. Before this reform movement came into being great literary works were all composed in Sanskrit but the exponents of the Bhakti cult taught and wrote in the language of the people. The evolution of Urdu, which to-day claims a respectable literature, also took place within this period.

QUESTIONS

1. Write a critical note on the political system which prevailed in India during the rule of the Sultans with special reference to (i) the powers and privileges enjoyed by the King. (ii) the law which governed the succession to the throne. (iii) the relations between the Sultan and the Ulemas.
2. Give a sketch of the social and economic conditions of India under the Sultans of Delhi.
3. Account for the rise of the Bhakti cult and write a note on the teachings of any *two* reformers of the Bhakti school.
4. Enumerate the various influences, social and political, which brought about the reform movement popularly known as the Bhakti movement.
5. Write a note on the literature of mediaeval India. What were its special features?

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